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Modern English Writers

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Modern English Writers:

Being a Study of Imaginative Literature 1890-1914

By Harold Williams
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PREFACE

THIS book was completed not long before the outbreak of war in 1914, a date which will probably present to future generations a visible dividing line in almost every sphere of human activity. No man can be unconscious of a change within himself and in his preconceptions during the past four years. If most of the writers named in the following pages are still alive, few, perhaps those only whose work is an artifice rather than a response to life, continue contentedly in the old paths; and for the majority the pursuit of art and literature, as a primary objective, is temporarily dispossessed. The scope of this survey may, therefore, fairly be regarded as covering a period contained by natural boundaries. The introductory chapter assigns reasons for accepting the year 1890 as marking the end of a stage in literary history and the appearance of new ideals: the beginning of the great war was an abrupt break in all the affairs of men.

In only one or two cases has it been thought necessary, at the time of publication, to carry the story beyond the early months of 1914, save in the matter of an added date or footnote. Exceptions to a rule will be found in the pages which treat of Rupert Brooke and James Elroy Flecker, two poets whose deaths fell in the earlier part of the war. In the case of the former, at least, to leave unnamed the work of the last few months would be to omit nearly all that mattered. It has not, on the other hand, been possible to observe rigidly a line (as imaginary as the equator and as useful) drawn through the year 1890; and no more than a loose adherence, in the spirit rather than in the letter, has been attempted.

The author is not unconscious of the temerity of criticising in summary writers still living. Contemporary estimates need not be falsified by time, but they are subject to the indistinctness of near vision, to those

confusions and aberrations the critic could easily have avoided had he been removed from the scene instead of playing a part within it. Nevertheless these chapters may not be without interest and usefulness as a record of adventures among books, and possibly something more.

Apart from faults to be charged to the writer it may be that slips appear which would have been corrected in better times. During the greater part of the war the author has been serving, he has enjoyed fewer advantages in passing the proofs than he could have wished, and, on this score, he can perhaps make some claim to indulgence.

To the publishers thanks are especially due for helpfulness and advice at each stage of this book's production; acknowledgments are tendered to the editors of the *Fortnightly Review* and *Atlantic Monthly* for kind permission to reproduce, with modification, matter relating to Mr. Thomas Hardy and Sir William Watson; and, further, the writer is gratefully indebted, for information readily given, to the Rev. W. H. Flecker and to Miss Munro, as well as to many of those whose work is discussed in the pages which follow.

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INTRODUCTORY

NEW INFLUENCES AND TENDENCIES

EVERY year begins a new age, and each week we are in transition between distinct and important periods in the life-story of men. But in certain years or decades of years the rifts in the narrative are wider, and the eye in retrospect cannot avoid resting upon them. The majority of the human race lives upon the plains; but nations are largely divided from each other by seas, rivers and mountain ranges. And, in like manner, literature and art tend within periods that can be defined to expand upon the same plane. There will be inequalities of surface, broken ground and smooth, arid tracts and fertile slopes; yet in the whole we recognise a land tempered by a single climate. And such a land, lying under the influences of one climate, we see in those years between the death of Byronism as a cult and the beginning of the 'nineties in the last century; that period chiefly marked out in poetry by the work of Tennyson and Browning, in fiction by the novels of Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontës, George Eliot, and, in some degree, George Meredith and Mr. Thomas Hardy, in miscellaneous prose and essay writing by Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and Pater. But just as the eighteenth century proper was broken in its ninth decade by the shock of the French Revolution, so the Victorian age, with its antimacassars, glass pendants, religious polemics, muscular Christianity, and despairing belief in the earnestness and reality of life, loses itself in the sands ten or fifteen years before the close of the century. The rule and the graded scale have no place in literary history; we can draw no hard-and-fast line between periods, however distinct; Rogers and Campbell wrote long after the Revolution, Victorian novels and poetry are still published, perhaps always will be; nevertheless,

the century of Pope, Voltaire and Johnson was passing away in 1790, and the Victorianism of the Victorian age died about 1890.

By the year 1890 nearly everything we more peculiarly associate with the genius and achievement of Queen Victoria's reign was passing out of a present into a past, its work in prose and poetry was being diligently edited with notes and commentary to guide a later generation. The battle of science and theology, which vexed the first readers of *In Memoriam*, no longer disquieted, and even the searchings of *La Saisiaz* (1878) seemed remote. "The Victorian era comes to an end and the day of *sancta simplicitas* is quite ended," wrote Mr. Max Beerbohm in 1894. It was despite, or perhaps because of a naïve simplicity that the reign of Victoria was signally great in the annals of literature, thought, art, mechanical invention and commercial expansion. The Oxford Movement, the Broad Church Movement, the sceptical soul-earnestness of Clough and Arnold, the Darwinian theory, the miscellanies of Spencerian philosophy, Positivism, Pre-Raphaelitism were once master-keys to influential sects; by 1890 they were bent and only turned in the locks with much humouring. They were all in turn to the popular mind single remedies for complicated ills, and, when the cure failed to be as complete as many had promised, a reaction set in against these simple abstractions. Either in weariness or that distaste of the adolescent for the scheme of things in which they have been educated, men claimed the right to paint or to write of life as they saw it without speculation. The life of the present is with us, the deductions and philosophies uncertain, it suffices to show what is, without embodying personal interpretations—this realistic attitude was adopted by a number of artists and writers of the younger generation. But, as every stream has eddies which set backward beneath the bank, every change in the tide of events swirls uncertainly, seeking its way from the present into the future. The cross-currents are many and often wear the bank as quickly as the central stream; and this is exactly what we note in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

The year 1890 has been named as the virtual close of

the age commonly known as Victorian. In the decades preceding and following that year new forces and new influences take the place of those which had ruled since the romantic triumph early in the century and the decay of Byronism a little later. The nature of these new influences cannot be stated in a few words, but they may be roughly divided under four heads, which may best be explained by (1) an attempt to interpret the general significance of Oscar Wilde's æstheticism, (2) the aims of the group of writers who gathered about the *Yellow Book* and *Savoy*, (3) the influence of W. E. Henley, and (4) the ideals of the Celtic Revival in Ireland. Of these four, the work of Oscar Wilde slightly antedates the period with which this volume is more immediately concerned. On the other hand, it is to be remembered that the closing years of the last and the early years of this century are still too near to be seen in clear perspective. Nevertheless, certain broad tendencies manifest themselves; and, if it be remembered that no hard and fast demarcations are safe, it will be found that the majority of writers belonging to the period of this book incline to follow one or another of the chief directions of influence noted.

And, yet again, the Victorian age, which was passing in 1890, was not of one texture, nor did it disappear suddenly. George Meredith, for example, was typical of a period of transition. He was a Victorian, but not wholly of his time, for none of the great movements of the age, scientific, theological or literary, can claim his discipleship. He numbered friends in the extreme left of the scientific materialists, but he was as little of them as he was a follower of the churches; accepting neither an easy optimism nor a commonplace pessimism, he steered a middle course between the two; and his strong faith in humanity never led him into the camp of the Positivists. He was one of the few men of his time—Butler was another—to realise that life and art are too complicated to be solved by the formulæ of sects, that our chief business is with the present, and that the soul lives on hopes, not dogmatic certainties. He never abandoned in contempt the hope of the infinite buried in the finite, but the problem did not weigh upon him as upon so many Victorian poets

and prose-writers. In his ability to see things clear and whole without attempting to simplify, in his power to doubt without losing faith, in his contentment to use the present that is given and speculate on the unprovable without uneasiness, Meredith belonged less to the middle than to the end of the century in which he began to write. His psychology also, like his thought, is elaborate and complex, unlike the simple, sentimental and Arthurian moralities which surrounded him in his youth.

It was not, however, till 1885, with the publication of *Diana of the Crossways*, that Meredith became an even moderately popular writer; and about this time can be placed the popularisation of the theory of "art for art's sake." The appearance of this doctrine, that art goes first with life padding humbly at her heels, clearly marks a turning from the broad turnpike of Victorianism, now grown a little dusty with the number travelling that way. Even the most extreme of the Pre-Raphaelite poets and painters were often as much concerned with history as with art, their poems and pictures were founded upon myth, legend and story long traditionary with men. Their art was not intelligible without a knowledge of the ideas underlying it; it was not only a matter of line and colour, the impressionistic rendering of a moment. Rossetti painted "Dante's Dream"; Swinburne wrote *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) and *Erectheus* (1876).

If not the popularly recognised apostle of the new gospel of art for art's sake, James M'Neill Whistler was the most consistent follower of its tenets. His work owes nothing to the human, moral and sentimental interest; his whole aim is to assimilate and select from the visual and transient impressions of the eye. Tradition and mediævalism are nothing to him: he paints the mists and smoke-dimmed sunsets of the Thames without yielding to the pathetic fallacy, and his "Portrait of Miss Alexander" is a "Harmony in Gray and Green." His practical inability completely to master line or colour governed the direction of his theory and practice, and partly explained his abandonment of colour for the use of tone. His primary importance to the story of English art, however, is his persistent exclusion from painting of history or literature.

The action Whistler brought against Ruskin in 1878 gave his theories a general notoriety; and soon after this Oscar Wilde's æstheticism was sufficiently well known to ordinary theatre-goers to call for the satire of *Patience*. And Wilde unwittingly engineered the popularity of the operetta in the United States by lecturing in that country in 1882 on 'Æsthetic Philosophy.' For many Americans he was the specimen æsthete who made intelligible the satire of the English musical comedy. Wilde returned to England the high priest of æstheticism; but he failed to observe the consistency of Whistler in another field of art. The endeavour of either was to insulate art from the multifarious activities of everyday life, to sit in a little corner and burn incense before jealous gods unknown to the heathen Philistine. Wilde, like Whistler, tried to make of art an exclusive cult for a chosen people. He failed because he had a larger mind and wider knowledge, because his theories constantly overran the measure he attempted to impose upon them, and because he was more human than Whistler—he was, as André Gide has called him, "*un grand viveur*." Wilde was a man of genius; nearly everything he has written suggests a faculty for something greater, for his work as a whole is an illustration of the wreck of art upon theory. He is, however, of interest and importance as the chief figure in one of those movements which mark the close of the period which we call Victorian for want of a better term of definition.

Wilde completely transfigured the early influences under which he fell and gave them again to the world in a new form. The strongest impressions he received during his undergraduate days at Oxford came to him from Ruskin, Pater, and a journey in 1877 to Italy and Greece. But the academic and thrice-refined doctrine of Pater became a sensuous æstheticism, and Ruskin's assumption of an ethical rule for the judgment of art is reversed. In *Modern Painters* Ruskin had written in explanation of himself as a critic of art: "In my works on architecture the preference accorded finally to one school over another is founded on a comparison of their influences on the life of the workman." The one-time disciple, Wilde, declared: "They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only Beauty. There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral

book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all." Perverse and crochety as Ruskin's judgments often are, the moral standard is always the final court of appeal: for Wilde art was a cult independent of life, the use of the ethical rule was a confusion of thought; art was neither moral nor immoral, it was simply non-moral.

Wilde has supplied clear expositions of his theory of the nature of art in the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and in his essay on *The Decay of Lying*. If we accept his postulate that such a thing as an art wholly independent of life can exist, we see that his assertion of its non-morality is not a mere flouting of popular prejudice, but a direct consequence of his theory. If art can be produced without reference to nature, whether human or inanimate, we can scarcely attribute moral responsibility to the artist or his work. And this was Wilde's position. "The proper school to learn art in," he writes in *The Decay of Lying*, "is not Life but Art": and again, in the same essay, "All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals." He believed, impossible as it is to conceive the position, if art be a product of human activity, that "Art never expresses anything but itself." Far from regarding art as a mirror of life he asserted, "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life"; and he added as a corollary: "External Nature also imitates Art. The only effects that she can show us are effects that we have already seen through poetry, or in paintings." The handling of the dialogue in this essay bears witness to the innate literary skill of Wilde; but his logic, like his art, is impressionistic and irrelevant. If Wilde were merely trying to say, as by some he has been understood to say, that life strives to express itself in art and therefore follows art, his essay only calls for the remark that he has succeeded in bedizening with useless and confusing epigrams a truth often simply and clearly stated before him. This, however, is not his meaning, for Wilde is never weary of asserting the independence of life and art. If he had regarded art as the highest expression toward which life was constantly striving he could not have written, "All art is quite useless," perhaps the only remark in the preface to *Dorian Gray* entirely relevant to the matter of the book.

Oscar Wilde and Mr. Arthur Symons are in the succession of Ruskin and Pater, but they stand on the other side of a rift, and mark a new period. Ruskin had declared that there were laws of truth and right in art as fixed as those of harmony in music and affinity in chemistry, laws ascertainable by study, labour and thought. In the more systematic part of *Modern Painters* he makes some parade of method in the discovery and arrangement of these canons of art, but soon desists with the remark, so congenial to his habits of mind, that too systematic a book is rather a hindrance than a help to the reader. Ruskin's great talent for close observation and analysis of detail could never make him the master of a complete philosophy of the beautiful: the facts which remain clear are, that with him art was a criticism of life and nature, its functions moral, and that his ultimate judgments were guided by the ethical standard. In earlier life Pater, his disciple, departed so far from his master as to embrace a vague kind of æsthetic hedonism, nourishing the inner flame of life on emotions aroused by beauty; but in later years he adopted an esoteric Christianity and a more pronounced moral attitude toward life and art. In the work of Pater, as a critic of art, there is nothing sufficiently decisive or original to mark a point of fresh departure. He is not ill at ease in the same house with Ruskin and Tennyson. With Oscar Wilde and Mr. Arthur Symons it is far otherwise: art is no longer an integral part of life, decking its halls with Morris hangings, but a way of escape into a haven secluded from crude reality.

It is needless to expose the irrationality of a theory which conceives of an art independent of everyday life. No work of art can be wholly impersonal. If Wilde asserts in *The Decay of Lying* that, "Art never expresses anything but itself," it is not with full knowledge that he can support his thesis; for in the preface to *Dorian Gray* he offers the less dogmatic assertion that, "To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim." Nor is the preface consistent within itself; before the conclusion he writes, "It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors." Art cannot be held to mirror and conceal the artist or spectator at one and the same time. The conclusion of the whole matter must be that art reveals the artist in

greater or lesser degree, and mirrors life the more abundantly as the artist is in touch with the whole experience of life.

The impulses, orthodox or sceptical, of art and poetry in the Victorian age were largely governed by a belief that conduct was all-important. Wilde's unavailing attempt to create an intellectual theory of art, of a sensuous æstheticism, was the first sign of a reaction. It was followed or accompanied by other formative tendencies, which are still working themselves out in our midst. The central decades of the last century were almost wholly Teutonic in feeling and inspiration. The work of Carlyle in introducing German literature to English readers had borne abundant fruit where it was least recognised, and Matthew Arnold's praise of the lucidity, logical acumen, "openness of mind and flexibility of intelligence," of the French people fell on deaf ears. The group of young writers and artists who gathered about the *Yellow Book* (1894–97) and the *Savoy* (Jan. to Dec., 1896) represents a reasoned and intellectual reaction in the direction of Celtic and French ideals; and other attempts at producing an art and literature of a new form appeared in *The Dome* (1897, 1898) and *The Pageant* (1896, 1897). In poetry the most notable contributors to the *Yellow Book* were Mr. Arthur Symons, John Davidson, Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Laurence Binyon, Mr. W. B. Yeats and Mrs. Marriott Watson; in prose fiction may be named Henry James, Henry Harland, Hubert Crackanthorpe, Mr. Kenneth Grahame, 'George Egerton,' and, belonging to an older generation, Mr. George Moore; among artists whose drawings appeared in the magazine were Aubrey Beardsley, Conder, Mr. Charles Shannon, Mr. Will Rothenstein and Mr. Laurence Housman. Writers so diverse from each other in aim and ideal as these cannot be placed in a common class or bound by a single definition. The hard realism of Crackanthorpe and the mysticism of Mr. W. B. Yeats or Mr. Laurence Housman have neither part nor lot with each other. But undoubtedly the clearest note of the new publication was a conscious effort to avoid the moral sentiments and romantic idealisms of the Victorian age, and to paint life with an exact and unshrinking realism. Crackanthorpe was the disciple of Maupassant

and described drab and seamy corners of life with cold realism; 'George Egerton' wrote in the same spirit, touching her narrative, however, with commentary upon the relationship of woman to man in the social economy; Mr. Symons and Davidson wrote poems of the ballet, the music-hall and Fleet Street.

The first number of the *Yellow Book* contained a fine essay by Mr. Arthur Waugh on 'Reticence in Literature,' which might easily, on account of its importance, be taken for a manifesto of the new periodical. The habit of reticence, he points out, is not a national characteristic, for, as a people, we admire openness of speech. But to the value of outspoken bluntness there is a limit. Wise men always exercise a reserve. The representative literature of each age is not its critical and philosophical, but its creative. And for the literature of each age is set a point of reticence—the intelligence and taste of that age. Beyond this the point of reticence is marked by "the permanent standard of artistic justification, the presence of the moral idea." The essay is, in brief, an assertion of the classic ideal; and we are often reminded of Matthew Arnold. But few of the opinions expressed in this essay find illustration in the magazine. The first number opens with a story by Henry James, it contains Mr. Max Beerbohm's witty and well-known 'Defence of Cosmetics,' and other sketches, stories and poems bearing little family relationship to each other. The truth is that Harland, the editor, never succeeded in giving to the magazine any recognisable individuality. The first three numbers contained clever and sometimes strong work by young men, who were united only in the attempt to discover for themselves a personal and new mode of expression. The Arthurian romances of Tennyson and the mediævalism of the Pre-Raphaelites were sinking into a meaningless and hoary tradition, and against this convention the group which gathered about the *Yellow Book* and the *Savoy* rebelled, striking out in different paths toward severe realism, Gallic wit and gaiety, Celtic or bookish mysticism, according as each man was called and found himself able. But their aims were too diverse to admit of fusion, and the more important contributors to the *Yellow Book* soon fell away.

The periodical appeared quarterly and struggled on to a thirteenth number; but long before this it had lost any character it ever possessed. The first four numbers alone are of interest and significance. By the summer of 1895 the *Yellow Book*, in the words of Mr. Symons, "ceased to mark a movement, and had come to be little more than a publisher's magazine." Aubrey Beardsley withdrew his support, and his pictures now appeared in the rival *Savoy* edited by Mr. Arthur Symons. The *Savoy*, though it enlisted many of the writers to the earlier publication, was a better and more purposeful magazine than the *Yellow Book*. In an editorial note Mr. Symons disclaimed any epithet for his contributors—Realists, Romanticists or Decadents: all he offered was good work. "We hope to appeal to the tastes of the intelligent by not being original for originality's sake, or audacious for the sake of advertisement, or timid for the convenience of the elderly-minded." To turn over the pages of the *Yellow Book* now is to feel that we are handling an ordinary magazine, better perhaps than most, yet only a publisher's magazine. The *Savoy* is printed on poorer paper, and the illustrations are often not well reproduced, but we are conscious that it stands for something. Ernest Dowson, Mr. Symons, Mr. Havelock Ellis write well; there is no narrowness or limitation in subject and outlook; the contributors to the magazine are possessed with the spirit of intellectual enthusiasm and curiosity, they are anxious to discover and know life and the world in which they find themselves. Mr. Symons writes on Verlaine and De Goncourt, Mr. W. B. Yeats on Blake, Mr. Havelock Ellis on Nietzsche, world-names that do not fall into a natural or easy conjunction. The *Yellow Book* presents chiefly the pose of the dilettante; the *Savoy* stands for the earnest and sincere work of young poets, dreamers and students of life's meaning.

To the present-day reader the essays in authorship of Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1872–98) are by far the most interesting part of the *Savoy*, although these pieces may have no intrinsic importance. Beardsley used his pen very much as he used brush or pencil. In his drawings the line is clear and sharp; the massing of light and blackness (not shadow) is hard and precise. The extraordinary

effect he can gain by this method is well illustrated by the contrasted masses of black and white in "The Wagnerites,"—the white bosoms of the women standing out against the darkness of the theatre. For it was thus that Beardsley saw the world; his intellect was hard and unemotional. Despite the grotesque fancy of his designs he possessed an almost incisively practical mind. Not beauty, as commonly perceived, but the curious, the unexpected and the grotesque was what he saw; his line had no direct reference to the whole as seen, but to a satirical or psychological representation of some aspect of life. And in writing his manner is the same. Every sentence was composed separately for its own sake, and allowed to find later some finished niche in the growing narrative. His method reveals the sketcher rather than the man conscious of the nature of prose. He contributed to the *Savoy* three poems and a prose fragment, 'Under the Hill,' a parody of the story of Venus and Tannhäuser. Beardsley's prose is fantastic and artificial. It reaches the confines of preciosity, and the liberal use of French words gives a bizarre and grotesque appearance to the sentences. We hear of an "ombre gateway" and doves that love "to frôler." Nevertheless, the vision of Beardsley is always that of the artist and poet, and there are passages of real beauty in thought and phrasing. On the first page of 'Under the Hill' comes this exquisite little sentence: "It was taper-time; when the tired earth puts on its cloak of mists and shadows, when the enchanted woods are stirred with light footfalls and slender voices of the fairies, when all the air is full of delicate influences, and even the beaux, seated at their dressing-tables, dream a little." The touches of malicious wit are good. Of Helen we are told that she looked, "Not at all like the lady in 'Lemprière.'" His poem, 'The Three Musicians,' has a gay note of satire which reaches its point; and 'The Ballad of a Barber,' a curious little piece with a grim conclusion, deserves to be recalled for the simple beauty of one stanza—

> "Her gold hair fell down to her feet
> And hung about her pretty eyes;
> She was as lyrical and sweet
> As one of Schubert's melodies."

It was an ambition of Beardsley's to be a great writer, for the author he seems to have regarded with greater veneration than the artist; but had he lived longer it is improbable that he would have written anything save the curious and interesting, except in isolated passages and lines of beauty. His touch is hard and unsympathetic; frills and decorations of speech divert our attention from the matter, when there is any; his conception of composition was limited by the paragraph and even by the sentence. The faculties which made Beardsley the most original artist in the bizarre of his time could scarcely fit him to become a great writer. Nevertheless his name cannot well be dissociated from the text of the *Savoy*, though his illustrations to that magazine are of greater importance and value.

Mr. Arthur Symons was the typical and characteristic critic and exponent of those ideas which animated the younger writers of the *Yellow Book* and *Savoy*. Whether in criticism or in poetry his mind was the most subtle and comprehensive of the group; and in himself he illustrated admirably the realism and the mysticism of different writers in the new period. If we regard him merely as the writer of realistic poems descriptive of the stage, the ballet, or forbidden love, we do him an injustice, for these are to him symbols, as flowers and mists and hills were to Wordsworth, an attempt to perceive in the common externals of everyday life the ideal of which the visible is only a garment. Sometimes Mr. Symons will seem as unshrinking a realist as Crackanthorpe, at other times as inevitably mystical as Mr. W. B. Yeats: his vision of life is as subtle as Beardsley's was precise.

As a critic capable of original observation and analysis Mr. Symons is not at first to be found in his work. His *Introduction to the Study of Browning* (1886) is a good and straightforward handbook to the poet; and the essays and reviews collected in *Studies in Two Literatures* (1897) are too widely separated in date and too miscellaneous in character to present a homogeneous criticism. Yet several of these studies of Elizabethan drama, of contemporary French and English writers reveal the bent of his mind,—his flexibility, his sympathy with the French and his dreamy intellectualism. His sympathy for the

romantic, slightly unhealthy mysticism and consummate artistry of Christina Rossetti is intelligible, and not less, when writing of Coventry Patmore, his witty remark that in the Victorian scientific generation, "it was supposed that by adding prose to poetry you doubled the value of poetry." As we might expect, his "Note on Zola's Method" is a direct attack on Zola's habit of looking at life through a formula and studying it with immense industry by the help of that formula. The formula was as romantic and unreal as any dream of the idealist. Mr. Symons, the dreamer, angered with Zola's sordid realism, did not consciously perceive this, although his critical instinct seized upon it in passing, for he writes, —"So powerful is his imagination that he has created a whole world which has no existence anywhere but in his own brain,"—one of the aptest remarks ever made of the man who laboured mightily to represent life exactly as it is. In these and other essays of the volume we learn that we cannot place Mr. Symons either with the naturalistic school or with the emotional and sentimental romanticists.

The first of his books to present an individual conception of the nature of art and literature was *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899). The earlier studies were written like any other reviews and introductions, and might have come from the hand of any good contemporary: *The Symbolist Movement* is something different, for here Mr. Symons is writing of a school to which he himself belongs. The volume treats of Gérard de Nerval, Verlaine and other of the French symbolists, and with them Mr. Symons counts Mr. W. B. Yeats, to whom he dedicates his book. In Mr. Symons' interpretation symbolism is to literature what Platonism is to philosophy, or, to use another analogy, what the art of Mr. Gordon Craig is to the stage. "A symbol might be defined as a representation which does not aim at being a reproduction." Material things are but the shadow flung on the wall. Symbolism in literature is an effort to escape the drab of realism and the bounds of that which is visible, to express by the use of words the beauty of that ideal world of which the external is but a vesture. In symbolist literature, therefore, a poem exists for itself as a thing of beauty, like a gleam of light piercing through a veil. Language

consists of tokens and signs, and art to the symbolist is but an effort to reflect by signs and patterns the beauty of the spiritual. Thus, in a sense, symbolism is but old romanticism writ intellectually.

The distinction Mr. Symons draws between the drama of realism and symbolist drama, like Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Axël*, helps us further to realise the nature of symbolism. In realistic drama " the form . . . is degraded below the level of the characters whom it attempts to express," for that type of dialogue which imitates the conversation of everyday life can express no more than a tithe of what every man thinks and feels. But the drama of De l'Isle-Adam is a drama of spiritual forces and speaks with the voice of man's spirit, not with the words of his lips. It expresses not what we say, but what we are.

Mr. Symons' later volumes of prose contain some of the best and most illuminating criticism of recent years, but they add little that is valuable to the thought already expressed in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. In *Plays, Acting and Music* (1903) short essays, contributed chiefly to the *Academy*, are gathered together. *Studies in Prose and Verse* (1904), a companion volume to the *Studies in Two Literatures*, embodies several of the essays which appeared in the earlier book. Few men would dare to publish *Studies in Seven Arts* (1906): even Mr. Symons must sometimes write as an amateur, and his paper on cathedrals alternates between mere essay writing and the discovery of sermons in stones. But when he speaks of painting, of music, of sculpture, of dancing, of the stage, he can always claim to be heard. The last of his critical volumes, *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry* (1909), is the least literary and the least interesting book he has ever written. Every poet, important or negligible, who may, even by a wide stretch of courtesy, be classed with the romantic movement at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century is here to be found tabulated by his or her date and discussed with an intellectual aloofness that makes heavy reading; and the arrangement of the names darkens counsel by a rule that is mechanical. The book can scarcely be read, although we may turn to it as we refer to an encyclopædia.

In the preface to *Plays, Acting and Music* is a passage

which is worth quotation for the light it throws on Mr. Symons' faith and doctrine as a critic—

"In all my critical and theoretical writing I wish to be as little abstract as possible, and to study first principles, not so much as they exist in the brain of the theorist, but as they may be discovered alive and in effective action, in every achieved form of art. I do not understand the limitations by which so many writers on æsthetics choose to confine themselves to the study of artistic principles as they are seen in this or that separate form of art. Each art has its own laws, its own capacities, its own limits; these it is the business of the critic jealously to distinguish. Yet, in the study of art as art, it should be his endeavour to master the universal science of beauty."

And the display of method here made is repeated when he writes in *Studies in Prose and Verse* that he is interested only in "first principles," that criticism "is a valuation of forces, and it is indifferent to their direction. It is concerned with them only as force, and it is concerned with force only in its kind and degree." He professes to the possession of only a few principles of criticism, which, however, he asserts that he constantly applies as tests. But it is difficult to discover what these tests are. They cannot be gathered as we gather Matthew Arnold's principles. We may learn that mysticism and idealism appeal to Mr. Symons, that the classical spirit is revered, but only afar off, that realism is alien to his mind and only awarded praise when it appears in a Balzac or a Flaubert, whom he cannot gainsay. Flaubert is even "the one impeccable novelist." We see that though a romanticist he is intellectual, distrusting reliance upon the unaided instincts and emotions; and, therefore, he quarrels with Tolstoy's theory of art. But to learn as much as this does not carry us far, and a reason why we do not clearly grasp Mr. Symons' principles is that his critical writings consist chiefly of occasional pieces, and within themselves the ordering of matter might often be better. Indeed it is obvious that Mr. Symons is never wholly aware of his principles. There mingle in him the poet, the scholar, the religious mystic, the lover of physical sensations, the intellectualist; and therefore he is not

always consistent nor always sure of his ground. Like Gautier he inclines to find the best in everything, and is more quick to appreciate than to condemn; and this, little as that side of the matter is often understood, is the true business of criticism. Good criticism will appreciate wherever it can, bad criticism alternates between rhapsody, rodomontade and vilification.

Among living English critics none other shows the range, the subtlety and the power of illumination belonging to Mr. Symons. He is almost equally at home as a critic of literature, music, acting, dancing and painting: his knowledge is wide, his experience curious, he has the mind of the student and the gifts of the artist. As a critic he stands in the succession of Pater, for whom he shows an exaggerated respect in one of the early essays. And his manner, like that of Pater, often has a note of cold and dreamy aloofness, although he has none of Pater's sentimentality, and is far more a man of the world. It is a misfortune that he has trusted almost entirely to the short and occasional essay and attempted no work of wide and general survey, save in one instance, and that with unhappy result. When moved he can lapse into exaggeration, but he is more frequently coldly intellectual, notably in his *Romantic Movement in English Poetry*. Only too often in his critical writings we seem to be listening to the versatile expert explaining art to experts; yet no twist of academicism narrows his outlook.

The genius of Mr. Symons is doubly rich in a strong intellectualism and a dreamy romanticism, and it is the possession of these contrasted tendencies of mind which makes him an important figure in his time and place. His intellectualism led him to sympathise in a degree with the work of French realists and their English disciples, his dreamy romanticism to an understanding of the French Symbolists, Blake, and the Celtic movement in Ireland, typified in the person of Mr. W. B. Yeats. Mr. Symons shares nothing with the moral or sentimental romanticisms of the Victorian age or the Byronic romanticism which preceded them—he is an intellectual romanticist.

Oscar Wilde and the group of the *Yellow Book* have been named among new forces. Less notable, but standing distinctively for a new and vigorous influence was

William Ernest Henley. In nothing that is essential can we differentiate between Henley the poet and Henley the journalist and critic. He will, therefore, demand fuller treatment at a later stage; and it is only necessary here to indicate his influence in fostering a tendency to a typically Anglo-Saxon noisy verse and prose of action and imperialistic politics. An invalid all his life, struggling against physical disabilities that would have crushed a weaker man, Henley sang loudly the courageous defiance of life's ills and the joy of tireless doing. He had a simple faith in strong and efficient men, in the value of material prosperity, he gloried in the spectacle of British imperial rule, and he lived long enough to blow the trumpet of patriotism in the days of the Boer War, with as ready a faith as any religious fanatic that the Lord was on his side. Henley had an admirable gift for discovering talent in others, and it was chiefly as an editor that he came directly into contact with the younger men of his time and assisted them. Among these were Mr. Rudyard Kipling, George Warrington Steevens (1869–1900), the war correspondent, and Sir Gilbert Parker, who may be named as severally illustrating in some degree the manner and influence of Henley. In 1877–78 he was editor of the weekly, *London*, and published in its pages Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*. From 1882–86 he supported Whistler and interpreted the genius of Rodin to England in the *Magazine of Art*. In 1889 he became editor of the *Scots Observer*, and when this was removed to London in 1891, as the *National Observer*, Henley became a powerful influence. He gathered round him a large band of notable contributors—R. L. Stevenson, T. E. Brown, G. W. Steevens, Andrew Lang, Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. J. M. Barrie, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, Mr. Arthur Morrison, Mr. G. S. Street, Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. W. B. Yeats, H. D. Lowry and Mrs. Rosamund Marriott Watson. Not all these, if any, can be counted among his direct followers, but it was impossible to come into contact with Henley without receiving some influence from the vigorous and independent personality of the man and the writer. Henley was more than one among many others; he represented an interpretation in new terms of a cult well known forty years before he made it popular

again. He is the muscular agnostic, the counter-part in the world of Kingsley in the Church. As Kingsley talked in a loud voice to reassure himself in the dark, so does Henley; as Kingsley was constitutionally incapable of thinking for himself, but an admirable interpreter to the masses of other men's thoughts, so was Henley; as Kingsley had, on occasion, one of the best ears for metre of any poet in the last century, so had Henley; and further they were fellows in a tendency to moods of vigorous Anglo-Saxon melancholy. These lines might well have been written by Kingsley—

"So, till darkness cover
Life's retreating gleam,
Lover follows lover,
Dream succeeds to dream.

"Stoop to my endeavour,
O my love, and be
Only and for ever
Sun and stars to me."
(*Echoes,* xvi.)

Like Kingsley's verse it is at once strong and pretty, and it has no subtlety.

Henley was the strong and happy invalid, bravely encouraging himself in a belief that life was good; and, because he possessed so few of life's material benefits, he was inclined, like Whitman, to preach material prosperity as a gospel, admiring in others the power to win success from adverse circumstance. He was not a thinker, but he had a good historical sense, a passionate enthusiasm for individual men and women, a love of great causes in their concrete manifestations, and he was thus fitted to lead and inspire, if not to illuminate.

In the same years a fourth distinctive literary movement, more important and more productive of fine and enduring work than any of the three named, makes its appearance. The Irish literary movement represents the awakening of a new sense of national consciousness. Its aims have not been single, the workers have followed different paths, but the faith has been one, and a race-consciousness has inspired in the writers of the Irish school a type of literature impossible in a city so cosmo-

politan as London, the whirlpool toward which nearly all English writing is attracted. In England writers have little sense of common race and faith, each man shuts himself in his own workshop or shares his opportunities with a few others, and his work emerges as whole as it may from the unresting conflict of hostile thoughts and ideals. The writers of the Irish literary movement, diverse as the results may be, have a knowledge of community in fellowship and work. The movement has produced a poetry of mysticism and national consciousness in the writings of Mr. W. B. Yeats, 'A. E.' (Mr. George Russell), Mr. Padraic Colum, Moira O'Neill and others; the finest example for over a century of English literary drama in the work of J. M. Synge; and a scholarship to illumine the older life and poetry of Ireland in the person of Dr. Douglas Hyde.

Ireland, by virtue of her position, has been saved from the prosperity and all-devouring commercialism of modern Europe. She is still, as she was centuries since, a small island of the western seas, poor and religious. It is the hope of Mr. W. B. Yeats and those who are with him that they may some day spread in their country "a tradition of life that makes neither for great wealth nor great poverty, that makes the arts a natural expression of life, that permits even common men to understand good art and high thinking, and to have the fine manners these things can give." The ideal is high and inspiring, but it stands on a level with the attempts to revive handicrafts or folksong among cottagers living in an age of bleak industrialism. The times will prove too much for the Gaelic League and the Celtic Revival; but a losing fight nobly played is more inspiring and valuable than overwhelming victories easily gained. The Irish literary movement, as a movement, will expire and leave no mark on practical life; but it will leave some dreams and a little good art to be remembered when the commercial triumphs of our age are forgotten and have ceased to interest the men of another time. The end of all great religious and artistic movements is not that they achieve their end, but that they inspire the work of a few individuals.

PART I

POETRY

CHAPTER I

POETS OF THE TRANSITION

Oscar Wilde—Alfred Austin—Robert Bridges—Watts-Dunton—Andrew Lang—Edmund Gosse—Wilfrid Scawen Blunt—Alice Meynell—Margaret Louisa Woods.

THE process of history is comparable to a gardener digging leaf-mould in a lane and sifting out the coarse particles till the fine earth is left for use in his flower-beds. The results of man's practical activity pass through the sieve of time and are quickly refined by the demand of utilitarianism. In other words the history of human life is the story of a ceaseless process of valuations. The writer of contemporary history is severely handicapped, for he works unaided in his estimates; he must judge as best he may without the help of time's sifting process. The historian of literature is not only faced with complications more intricate and less defined, but for him time valuations work themselves out more slowly. He may distinguish between writers and groups of writers in contemporary literature, but he cannot pretend to give a reasoned survey of their ultimate significance. Nor can he safely mark the stages at which a mode of thought, a fashion in writing, is lost, and its place taken by a new mode, a new fashion. But, if all judgments of contemporary writers must be tentative, it is to be remembered, on the other hand, that no literature concerns us more closely than that which is being written in our own lifetime. No reader, no writer is strong enough to resist his time and place. Thoughts and aims quickly modify in every few years, and a general knowledge, even if inaccurate in detail, of the literature of the day cannot be without a personal value. Further, however impartial may be the ideal in study and criticism, the personal equation must weigh more strongly than in our attitude

toward a literature which has passed through the rocking sieve of the years.

In the year 1890 the great work of poets representative of later Victorian days was already a thing of the past. Swinburne and Meredith, to name but two, overlived the dividing line by nearly twenty years, but they added nothing of outstanding importance to the tale of their work. There are, on the other hand, a few poets, either living or only recently dead, who had gained their distinctive standing before 1890, whom it is difficult not to name in a transitional chapter, for they belong almost equally to the story of this generation and a generation that is gone. Mr. Thomas Hardy, for example, as a novelist virtually finished his work many years since, but his poetry is of fresh significance, and derives in nothing from the Victorian traditions. As a poet he must be placed in another chapter with the younger generation. Among those whose work may be taken as an instance of overlapping may be named Oscar Wilde, Alfred Austin, the late poet laureate, his successor, Mr. Robert Bridges, Andrew Lang, Watts-Dunton, Mr. Edmund Gosse and a few others. The inclusion of these poets in a single chapter is dictated not by the recognition of any peculiar unity in their methods, but by the fact that though much of their work antedates the period of our survey it is impossible to dissociate them from the living poetry of more recent years.

Oscar Wilde, 1856–1900.

Oscar O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin, and early imbibed literary leanings from his mother, who wrote under the pseudonym of 'Speranza.' At Oxford Wilde won the Newdigate Prize in 1878 with a poem on *Ravenna*. At Oxford, further, he adopted his life-long pose as the æsthete, filled his rooms with blue china and art trifles, cultivated the manners of the complete idler, but succeeded in taking a first-class in Classical Moderations and *literae humaniores*. Already he had written poems which appeared in various periodicals. A selection of these early pieces was printed as *Poems by Oscar Wilde* (1881). The chief additions to this volume were *The Sphinx* (1894), in the metre of *In Memoriam*, and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898).

Wilde's poetry is not an important part of his life's work. In the volume of 1881 he is frankly imitative of many poets. Much of his early poetry resembles a decorative dado, it lacks intensity and sincere feeling. Among the longer poems 'The Burden of Itys' is noteworthy, among the shorter the beautiful and unaffected little dirge, 'Requiescat,' suggested by the death of his sister in childhood, and several of the sonnets, especially the fine 'Madonna Mia,' are good. *The Sphinx*, a record of "amours frequent and free," is a more individual utterance than any of the earlier poems; but *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, written when Wilde came out of prison, is by far his greatest piece of writing, whether in prose or verse. The style, the plaining recurrence of word melody, the imagery, all convey a haunting picture of prison cell and high-walled yard, where—

> "—each day is like a year,
> A year whose days are long."

And the repetition with slight changes of the sad stanza—

> "I never saw a man who looked
> With such a wistful eye
> Upon that little tent of blue
> Which prisoners call the sky,
> And at every drifting cloud that went
> With sails of silver by."

is a striking example of the effective use of echo and refrain. Wilde here adopts, with immense gain, a simple language in place of a decorative. The poem comes from the heart of a man who has been through the valley of shadows, and nothing written by Wilde has the same enduring quality as *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Yet none of his writing in verse is of special importance; nor can it be said that English poetry would be regrettably poorer had Wilde never written save in prose.

For over forty years Tennyson held the office of poet laureate, and, if many were inclined to agree with Fitzgerald that after the volumes of 1842 all changes in Tennyson were changes for the worse, few questioned his fitness to represent officially the poetry of England. More comprehensively than any poet of his time he expressed

in beautiful words the average mind of the Victorian age in its best hopes and ideals. The choice of a successor to Tennyson left the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, in a dilemma. In poetic genius Swinburne was indubitably pre-eminent, but the scandal of *Poems and Ballads* (1866) still clung to him, and his political views were a difficulty; and Sir (at that time Mr.) William Watson, who might, in default of Swinburne, have hoped for the appointment, was, on the ground of his radicalism, at a disadvantage. The Prime Minister refused to yield immediately to the claims definitely advanced by Sir Edwin Arnold, Sir Lewis Morris, Alfred Austin and others. The post was kept open till the announcement was made on New Year's Day, 1896, that the Queen approved the appointment of Alfred Austin, who enjoyed a record for unblemished patriotism if not for any remarkable talent as a poet.

Alfred Austin, 1835–1913.

Alfred Austin was born near Leeds, and educated at Stonyhurst and Oscott in the Roman Catholic faith of his father. After taking his degree at the University of London he entered at the Inner Temple, and was called to the Bar in 1857. But on his father's death he abandoned the profession of law, and after some years became an active journalist, especially in connection with the *Standard*, a paper for which he wrote conservative leaders. And as a capable journalist he won well-deserved success.

He began to write verse early, and first drew attention to himself with *The Season* (1861), a satire composed in rhyming couplets after the manner of Dryden and Pope, with an admixture of Byron. And to the end of his life Byron was *the* strong influence in moulding his poetry. His later work may be divided into poetic drama and volumes of lyric verse. The five large poetic dramas are *The Tower of Babel* (1874), *Savonarola* (1881), *England's Darling* (1896), *Prince Lucifer* (1887), and *Fortunatus, The Pessimist* (1892). In the first three Alfred Austin attacked by implication the degrading materialism of modern England. The philosophical poems, *Fortunatus* and *Prince Lucifer*, exhibit the necessity of faith in a moral and spiritual law, a moral law founded upon the conservative tendencies of society. None of these longer

poems revealed Austin as a profound or original thinker, but they showed a man who had a message for his age, a message which he was able to express with a directness and force not contemptible, and a poet capable of writing sufficiently good if not very imaginative blank verse. He is no fanatic, yet eagerly at war with the false luxury of his age; and without prejudice against other countries he is convinced that England is the best of fatherlands. Patriotic love of fatherland is the constant theme of his shorter lyrics; and in his more ambitious poems, of which the best are *Fortunatus* and *Prince Lucifer*, he expounds his philosophy of life, and that theory, like his patriotism, is bound up with perfervid conservatism. With Sir Henry Newbolt he would agree that man's hopes, ideals, and his salvation rest upon memory and the associations of the past. He believed that the common ethical and spiritual tradition of man is valid. And the patriotism which he never wearied of preaching sprang from the strong historical sense with which he was imbued.

But lyrical genius is rarely knit with historic sense. The world's lyrical poets, Shakespeare included, cared nothing for history as a chronicle of immutable facts. Alfred Austin, with his objective and common-sense attitude, had not the true gift of the lyrical poet, and even his philosophical poems are based on maxims of expediency drawn from history rather than upon any theory of metaphysical necessity. The dramas named illustrate this fact, and almost better *The Conversion of Winckelmann* (1897), a dramatic monologue in blank verse, and one of Alfred Austin's most successful poems. The character of Winckelmann is admirably exhibited; his argument with himself—whether or no for the sake of his life's pursuit to confess obedience (not intellectual assent) to Rome, is a matter-of-fact mental debate plainly within the cognisance of the poet. The subtler mind of Bishop Blougram would not be intelligible to him.

Alfred Austin's lyrics are chiefly patriotic pieces, idylls of pastoral life, poems of nature and love songs. His inspiration flows chiefly from a love of England as a nation with an historic past, as a land of green and quiet woodlands, meadows, flowery lanes and rose-embowered homesteads. With a persistent naïvety he preached that the

country is better than the town, a defensible position, and the disputable theory that country environment has been the inspiration of most great poetry from the earliest times to the date of his own writing. Whatever may be our judgment on the poetic value of his shorter pieces, it is impossible not to feel respect for his genuine love of fatherland and the peace of the country-side. To the question he asks in a deplorable line—

> "Don't you think that silence and stillness are the sweetest of all our joys?"

he has but one answer. His poems of pastoral life, never strongly human or realistic, are written in the manner of Tennyson's earlier idylls. 'A Farmhouse Dirge' immediately recalls 'The May Queen.' Others are pleasant, matter-of-fact and characterless. And the patriotic lyrics, though spirited and written unto edification, have little power of stimulating the imagination or exciting sudden enthusiasm.

In later years Alfred Austin wrote two more philosophic poems, *The Door of Humility* (1906) and *Sacred and Profane Love* (1908). The first is not unlike *In Memoriam* in form, although in theme it is an appeal to history and not to intuitive faith; the second contrasts worldly ambition with spiritual idealism in the guise of the literary career at its highest.

Although Alfred Austin scarcely understood the use of language in a higher and imaginative connotation he could write good verse, both rhymed and unrhymed, and on occasion he can surprise us with the magic of true poetry, as in these lines from *The Conversion of Winckelmann*—

> "In dreary Stendhal with its grass-grown ways,
> Where everything's forgotten, and the wind
> Wails over sand and unremembered bones."

But when he labours to astonish, as in the closing lines of his poem to 'George Eliot,' he only achieves a stucco grandiosity.

Unfortunately Austin began with a theory of poetry which he set forth with admirable precision in his critical books, *The Poetry of the Period* (1870) and *The Bridling of Pegasus* (1910). The chief source of offence in his theory

is an excessive admiration of Byron and the extemporary method of composition. According to this doctrine the poet is best advised to use the words that come unsought, expressing himself simply and artlessly without excessive elaboration. In consequence Austin's poetry is blotched with grammatical perversities, rich in passages of sheer colloquialism, vulgar slang, awkward and insecure sentences, and an untold quantity of useless *chenille*. His admiration for Byron was a piece of incongruous perversity. Except for his tendency to the commonplace he had nothing in common with Byron. But he had much in common with Pope. Like Pope's his mind was logical and ratiocinative, only redeemed by a limited faculty of poetic feeling and expression. Byron, on the other hand, was intensely subjective; and Austin produced his poetry by objective methods which share nothing with the impetuous spontaneity of Byron. If any poet had ever need to exercise care and pains that poet was Alfred Austin: he chose the other way, and with unhappy results, only accentuated by the superiority of some poems, such as *Prince Lucifer* and a few of the lyrics, in which he failed to practise his theory.

It would be difficult to discover a contrast greater than that between the ragged and irregular poetry of Alfred Austin and the deliberate and exquisite word-music of Mr. Robert Bridges, his successor in the office of poet laureate.

Robert Bridges, b. 1844.

Among living English poets none has a name more to be held in honour for the rare and delicate beauty of his work, for the respect he has shown for his art, and for the light he has thrown upon the laws and secrets of English versification. His *Account of Milton's Prosody* (1893) and the occasional essays distributed in various periodicals have done more than any recent writings to excite interest in the study of metre. It is not, however, by these nor by his eight verse plays, nor by the long and beautiful early poem, *Eros and Psyche* (1885), that he is likely to be remembered in the future, but by the sonnet group, *The Growth of Love* (1889), and by the five books of *Shorter Poems*, first collected in complete form in 1894. Especially in the *Shorter Poems*, and in a few lyrics of later years, such as the exquisite 'Winter Nightfall,' is Mr.

Bridges' art seen at its best. He is conversant with all that is best in classical poetry and in the work of our Elizabethan and Caroline poets; and no one has caught so surely the ethereal and transient lightness of sixteenth and seventeenth century cadences. His subtleties of word-music have been sought, they are deliberate and conscious, but art is concealed in the fulfilment of the poet's intent. Each one of these shorter poems is a mosaic in beautiful word-pattern, each word chosen with perfect fitness to serve its double function of expressing thought and enhancing the melody of the whole. Poems such as 'The Winnowers' and 'The Cliff-Top' are in imagination the slightest impressionism, but in delicacy of music and perfect beauty of language among the most exquisite of English lyrics. And to name two poems is to remember a score with equal claims to notice. Mr. Bridges' short lyrics, as a whole, are the most perfect work in pure prosody, in magic of cadence, since Herrick, Carew, Drummond and the Caroline poets.

In content, in thought, in imaginative power Mr. Bridges' work does not, on the other hand, claim any distinctive place. His poems are idylls and songs of graceful love, vignettes of landscape and meadowed valleys, glimpses into a serene and undisturbed mind. He has never felt with sufficient intensity to be a great poet. He has written of himself—

> "But since I have found the beauty of joy
> I have done with proud dismay:
> For howsoe'er man hug his care
> The best of his art is gay."

And if a pensive melancholy visits Mr. Bridges, the "proud dismay" of greater poets can hardly have touched him at any time. All his work is the reflex of a serene, a shy and cultured mind far removed from the stress of the world's endeavours and battles. The life of our day with its philosophies, sciences, social unrest and its outbreak against the strongholds of tradition and faith might not be, so far as the content of Mr. Bridges' poetry is concerned. His lyrics are the work of the scholar, the recluse and the prosodist, gifted with a true and constant but not a strong emotional response to life.

Walter Theodore Watts-Dunton, 1836–1914.

Walter Theodore Watts-Dunton is another of the scholarly poets. For thirty years he lived in Putney with Swinburne; before the close of the century he was well past middle age; but *The Coming of Love*, his single important volume of poetry, did not appear till 1897. As a boy he came into touch with gipsy life in East Anglia, and in early manhood he made the acquaintance of George Borrow. His knowledge of gipsy superstition and folklore and his friendship with Borrow became the two strong creative influences of his life. *The Coming of Love* and *Aylwin* (1898) set out, the one in verse, the other in prose, the romance of gipsy life.

But Watts-Dunton owed no part of his scholarly fastidiousness to Borrow or the gipsies. His preoccupation with criticism induced in him a discontent with less than perfection, and, after a long lifetime, virtually the whole of his original work is to be found in a volume of verse and one novel. In 1875 he joined the staff of the *Athenæum* and for twenty-three years contributed to that paper articles and reviews of outstanding distinction for their style, originality and wide range of knowledge. He also wrote a number of articles for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, including the splendid and exhaustive essay on poetry, the crowning work of his life as a critic.

His original writing was done largely in the intervals of continuous critical study and exposition. *The Coming of Love* is a series of poems written in widely separated years and united by a background of gipsy life and the narrative of the loves of Percy Aylwin and Rhona Boswell. The series holds a place by itself, and is as unique in modern English poetry as is the autobiographic fiction of Borrow in prose. These poems do not reveal Watts-Dunton as a spontaneous and lyric poet with gifts of the highest order; they show a mind steeped in the finer influences of nature and literature. Their charm lies in the emotional rendering of nature: the theme of the series is not the love-story, but the revelation of a *natura benigna*. Not all these poems are successful, and, on the whole, the best are those which avoid gipsy dialect. "Gipsy Heather," for example, gains greatly in purity of emotion

and in music by the sinking of realism. In one sense Watts-Dunton knew too much about poetry to be a wholly spontaneous and magical poet. Beautiful as are many of the descriptive passages, they come of forethought, and are neither sudden nor inevitable in conception or expression.

Nor can Watts-Dunton be accounted entirely successful in that poem of lyrical narrative and dialogue, 'Christmas at the Mermaid.' His greatest achievement as a poet lies in his sonnets which give him a place of honour among English sonnet-writers of all time. The strict limitations of the form suited his slow and deliberate manner. Nearly all his sonnets are good, the rise and reflux of octave and sestet almost always admirably handled. And, although his critical instinct inclined him to condemn argumentative poetry, he wrote two fine sequences of philosophical sonnets in 'A Grave by the Sea' and 'The Silent Voices.' The latter series, especially, is an exquisite and beautiful piece of writing. Yet his poetry, if never commonplace, never reads as the outcome of involuntary and unconscious rapture. He has the gift of thought and a true emotion, but he succeeds best in restricted metrical forms, for his mind is that of the scholar, slow, thoughtful and orderly, rather than that of the artist, swift and intense. And therefore *The Coming of Love*, although a volume to be set above the greater part of contemporary poetry, is not a book of equal importance with others whose content of labour and thought is by comparison slight.

Among other writers of the older generation, primarily men of letters and secondarily poets, are to be named Andrew Lang and Mr. Edmund Gosse.

Andrew Lang, 1844–1912.

Regarded strictly as a man of letters, and not as a sympathetic observer of contemporary life, Andrew Lang was one of the most remarkable men of his time in Europe. His range of knowledge and his power of work were astonishing. In the easy sweep with which he covered several domains of literature, in the swiftness combined with grasp and accuracy with which he wrote he has rarely had a rival. He described himself as a born reader, reading as naturally and continuously as he breathed, and the consequence is that, despite his vast stores of knowledge, he was the

inferior of at least one or two contemporaries in any single field. A scintillation of wit, a gift of style, at once light yet almost impeccably good, lent distinction to all his work. In his earlier years, when he first came to London to follow the vocation of man of letters, his chief interest lay with verse, and *Helen of Troy* (1882) was written under the influence of a strong ambition to produce a poem worthy his own ideals of English poetry. His disappointment at the poor reception of the poem turned him to light and occasional verse, which he had already practised in *Ballades in Blue China* (1880). There followed *Rhymes à la Mode* (1884), *Grass of Parnassus* (1888), *New Collected Rhymes* (1905), and other volumes of slight verse. One of the strong influences under which Lang fell was his love for French romantic literature in its wit and dexterity, and this, with modern variations, he reflected in some of the best light verse written in recent years.

Edmund Gosse, b. 1849.

In 1911 Mr. Gosse collected his verse in a single volume with a modest preface in which he tells us that the poems "belong in essence to a period which has ceased to exist, to an age which is as dead as the dodo." The truth of the matter is rather that the poems here collected belong to the great tradition of English poetry, which may, under all aberrations, be recognised for the same in each successive age. He has never been interested, save as student, in the fevered attempts of discontented strivers after originality to divert little rivulets to turn their private mill-wheels. Mr. Gosse makes no pretence to originality. There are many echoes in his verse of the poets who inspired him in his youth,—Tennyson, Browning, Rossetti, Swinburne; there are imitations of French forms, and among French poets he owes much to Leconte de Lisle, to whom he has written some fine memorial stanzas. In technique he is invariably exact; and, if he is rarely full of matter, he is not often thin or purposeless. *On Viol and Flute* (1873) was a volume of rare distinction for a young man of twenty-four. The two poems named 'Old and New' are evidence of a fine faculty in the choice of words, and they have the impassioned emotion which belongs to true poetry. Of quite another kind the pensive 'Lying in the Grass' is a beautiful nature poem. The

New Poems (1879) and *Firdausi in Exile* (1885) also contain many poems delightful in charm of technique and thought. But the best of his books is *In Russet and Silver* (1894), which is none the worse for the frank introduction of a note of middle age. The title-poem of the volume, 'Revelation,' and 'Chattafin' are pieces which will bear re-reading and lingering upon. And if *The Autumn Garden* (1908) shows some falling off it contains a few poems of nearly equal beauty with these.

Mr. Gosse does not make for anything new or original, but his verse takes a worthy place in English poetry written in the second half of the last century. And, further, his poems are interesting as a reflection of a period in modern literature, for he is receptive and sensitive to influences. If the poems make for nothing in themselves they are an admirable commentary, and a commentary worth reading apart from the text.

Alfred Austin set up as a model the poetry of Byron, but his thin talent and practical temper bore no resemblance to the impetuous genius of the author of *Don Juan*, and he was least faulty when his standard was least in mind. In the poetry of Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt there is, on the other hand, much that reminds us of Byron, and with Byron's faults he does succeed in combining some part of what is best in Byron's vitality, cynicism, and worldly, devil-may-care manner. *Griselda: a Society Novel in Rhymed Verse* (1893), although thrown into heroic measure, would hardly have been written had not *Don Juan* set the pattern; and it has sufficient wit and effective satire, combined with a fluent carelessness in versifying, to carry the reader on his way. In *The Wind and the Whirlwind* (1883) and *Satan Absolved: A Mystery* (1899) Mr. Blunt writes in rhetorical verse to denounce the selfish and cruel imperialism of the English, —a burden of prophecy which always lies heavily upon him. His experience when serving as a young man in the diplomatic service taught him to be on the side of the little and downtrodden peoples; and his advocacy of Irish freedom involved him in a short period of imprisonment, an incident celebrated in the verses of *In Vinculis* (1889).

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, b. 1840.

A good selection of Mr. Blunt's poetry was made in 1898 by W. E. Henley and George Wyndham. Since that date he has written *Satan Absolved* and the translations of the *Seven Golden Odes of Pagan Arabia* (1903); but, considered only as a poet, Mr. Blunt is at his best in the early *Love Sonnets of Proteus* (1880). These sonnets are rough, irregular, carelessly framed. Mr. Blunt does not merely neglect, he defies the canons of rhyme, and nearly every sonnet contains surprising transgressions. 'Chance' rhymes to 'hands,' 'death' to 'path,' 'alas' to 'face,' and 'lace' rhymes both to 'dress' and 'sash.' These crudities are indefensible; harsh janglings do not make for vigour, but in Mr. Blunt's case they are due neither to ignorance nor carelessness, and after we recover from our first surprise it is possible without serious qualms to take pleasure in the directness and force of these rough sonnets. In all his poetry Mr. Blunt writes as one for whom life and action are more than art. He is a traveller and a man of the world who has taken to the writing of verse because he enjoys it and has a true gift of utterance. And the thing said is of far greater importance to him than the manner of saying it. He is the brilliant amateur writing to exercise and delight himself, but no more than the amateur.

Since the eighteenth century the number of women writers in verse has multiplied fast, and the minor poetesses tend rapidly in our day to exceed calculation. Nevertheless, Christina Rossetti, the one English poetess of indubitable genius, has left no successor; Mrs. Browning's poetry is being lost in the perspective of time, and in recent years only a few women writers have betrayed clear and individual originality. But among poetesses still living who began to write many years ago must be named Mrs. Alice Meynell and Mrs. Margaret Louisa Woods.

Alice Meynell, b. 1850.

As long ago as 1875 Mrs. Meynell (then Miss Thompson) published her *Preludes*, and, although she failed to attract general notice, she won from Ruskin the eulogium that some of the passages in this volume contained the finest things he had seen in modern verse. The greater number of the pieces in *Preludes* was afterwards reprinted with changes and alterations in company with later work in

Poems (1893). Mrs. Meynell's thought is slight, and, although she is never verbose, these short poems cannot always carry their length, and might in some cases be bettered by the excision of stanzas. A beautiful simplicity is her greatest charm. She never tortures language nor seeks the inevitable and improbable word; and her diction is never subservient to the exigencies of rhyme. Nor, again, is she an experimentalist in metres and forms; her lyrical measures are the simplest; she never frames anything more elaborate than the sonnet. And if her sonnets have received more than their meed of eulogy, a few, and notably the well-known 'Renouncement,' may compare with those of Christina Rossetti, than whom no woman has written more perfectly in the sonnet form.

The simple melody of Mrs. Meynell's poems is often truly delightful—pensive with slight pauses in the rhythm that enhance the music. 'In Early Spring' is a good example of her work as a poet of nature, and in 'Parted' we have a tender poem of regret, which again reminds us of Christina Rossetti, although the fourth stanza—

> "Although my life is left so dim,
> The morning crowns the mountain-rim;
> Joy is not gone from summer skies,
> Nor innocence from children's eyes,
> And all these things are part of him"—

has a note of simple and human optimism alien to the religious mysticism of Christina Rossetti.

Mrs. Meynell has written little. Eight years after *Poems* she published a thin volume of *Later Poems* (1901), which is not wanting in the limpidity and simple charm of the earlier collection, although hardly anything matched the best she had written already. In 1913 her poems were collected with a few additions.

Mrs. Meynell's verse is graceful and tender rather than thoughtful or strong, but within her range she never fails of clearness, and she never, even in poems of love and devotion, becomes sentimental. The same sincerity, simplicity, clear and restrained thinking are carried over into her two volumes of miscellaneous essays, *The Rhythm of Life* (1893) and *The Colour of Life* (1896). These are poetic essays, almost prose-poems, on things in general.

The thought again is clear and definite, but the essays hold us by a charm of personal manner rather than by any freshness or originality in ideas.

Mrs. Woods began to write poetry before the period of this book, and she has continued to write since, but slowly and at infrequent intervals. The collected volume of 1907, containing the greater part of her best work, is well under two hundred pages of loose print, and the collection of 1914 adds but a few new poems. Nevertheless, slight as is the quantity of her work, her name cannot be passed over in speaking of the few poets who fall into that debatable region of time belonging neither wholly to Victorian influences nor to the spirit of the 'nineties. In some respects, if we judge Mrs. Woods by her novels, by the two racy and vigorous peasant poems, 'The May Morning and the Old Man' and 'Marlborough Fair,' or by the tragedy in rough and common life of that fine poetic drama, *Wild Justice* (1896), we might be led to count her with the realists. But, apart from the last-named writing, which contains passages of splendid and truly dramatic blank-verse, she shows little tendency in her poetry to realistic statement of the present. Her work is distinguished rather by gravity and a masculine strength of thought. Further, there is little marked difference between the earlier and the later volumes in the temper and character of her writing. The 'Gaudeamus Igitur' of the *Lyrics* (1888) is a strong and thoughtful poem, sufficient to lend distinction to any volume. The title-poem of *Aëromancy* (1896) is a grave and pensive elegy on Oxford written in good and well-handled terza-rima. In *Poems New and Old* (1907) the only piece that arrests attention, standing out from the earlier pieces there collected, is the noble ode upon England's dead and the—

Margaret Louisa Woods, b. 1856.

"New thoughts, new regions, unattempted things"

left as an inheritance to the living generations of the English. Mrs. Woods has written no greater poetry than this splendid and inspiring ode. In the *Collected Poems* (1914) she added the profound and strong unrhymed ode, 'High Tide on Victoria Embankment,' which suffers only from passing lapses into rhetoric incidental to this form,

together with 'Marlborough Fair' and a few new and beautiful songs and lyrics.

Small in quantity though her work may be Mrs. Woods is not to be dismissed with the hundreds of minor poetasters who write little because they can no more. She has no largess of facility nor any peculiar charm in the use of metre, but she has melody, her vision of life is genuinely poetical, her thought is always strong and individual, and she has a wonderful versatility, including in her range, and in each case with success, drama, ode, dialect poem, elegy, ballad, lyric and tender conceit.

There are other poets who began to write within the central decades of the nineteenth century and continued to write to its close or the early years of this century. But the chronological standard, mechanically applied, tends only to confusion. Sir Lewis Morris (1833–1907), famous as the author of the *Epic of Hades* (1876–77), was still writing poetry in the twentieth century, but he belonged to another age. Sir Edwin Arnold's (1832–94) *Light of Asia* appeared in 1879 and its characteristic facility without distinction clung to all his later work. Robert Buchanan (1841–1901) wrote *The Book of Orm* in 1870, and all that is of account in his work was finished before the century was drawing to an end. And the poetry of Lord de Tabley (1835–95), George Meredith (1828–1909), Frederick Myers (1843–1901) and T. E. Brown (1830–97) belongs to the story of Victorian literature. The work which has been briefly summarised in this chapter belongs to writers who cannot easily be dissociated from a period of human life which is of the past nor, on the other hand, from the opening years of the twentieth century, writers who can neither be neglected nor regarded as literary landmarks.

CHAPTER II

NEW FORCES IN POETRY

§ 1. Arthur Symons—John Davidson—W. E. Henley—Rudyard Kipling.
§ 2. Sir William Watson—Ernest Dowson—William Sharp—Francis Thompson.

§ 1

In an introductory chapter some attempt has been made to summarise and distinguish four phases in literary ideals which emerge and become clearly visible about ten years before the close of the last century. The arbitrary division of writers by schools is always to be deprecated if the dividing line be exaggerated into a partition wall. And this is more especially a mistake in an age when ideas are more rapidly diffused throughout the civilised world than at any other time. In days of slow communication and difficult travelling schools of painters, working almost independently of each other, might be found in Italy, Germany, Holland and Spain; but for centuries Europe had been in its use of Latin a single commonwealth of letters, and though later the adoption of vulgar tongues divided writers by nations, ideas, more volatile than technique, could not readily be imprisoned. If ordinary readers in each country are separated from each other, in the craft of literature men tend to become at one, for language is a vesture not the fetters of thought. And if we narrow our purview to a single country and time the difficulty in clear demarcation between writers is proportionately increased. The movement of influences, the coming and going of ideas, are not always outwardly traceable, and the contemporary as often as not conflicts with the permanent importance of the writer.

The purpose of roads, however, is twofold,—that they bring us to our destination, and, often of more significance,

that they give us the pleasure of our journey by the way. And the cutting of tracks through the study of history, art or literature has no other meaning. The dusty surface of the road has no beauty in itself, and only the sullen and insensible traveller walks with eyes unraised; the true wayfarer sees not the road, but the encompassing beauty of earth and sky. In travelling part of our road across new country we passed through the sometimes attractive but not arresting scenery of Wilde's poetry. At the same stage or a little later we come upon five names in a poetry standing distinctively for new and individual influences upon the time. As Oscar Wilde typified a first phase, Mr. Arthur Symons and John Davidson characteristically typify a second, and W. E. Henley and Mr. Rudyard Kipling a third. Mr. W. B. Yeats, who has been named as typical of a fourth aspect of literary revival in these years must find his place with other Irish poets of our time.

The poems of Mr. Symons' first volume, *Days and Nights* (1889), are but slight things. The melancholy of intellectual rather than emotional sadness characterises each poem. He writes chiefly with his mind, but his verse is less intellectualised in the process than is common when poetry is wrought out in this fashion. The intellectual poet is often dry, Mr. Symons scarcely ever. If music be the most emotional of the arts, poetry is the outcome of jar between emotion and intellect, each of these elements of our nature striving for the mastery. Intellect and emotion at one and in complete harmony make for contentment and unproductiveness; their unresting conflict produces the highest of the arts—poetry. Where intellect masters the emotions we have the clear light of weaker passages in Matthew Arnold or Sir William Watson; where emotion alone rules we have the effervescence of American poetesses and their imitators. From the dissatisfaction of intellect and emotion emerges poetry.

Arthur Symons, b. 1865.

Mr. Symons' strongest quality is a subtle intellectual power, but his poetry is never parched by intellect. The first volume, if it holds little of great merit, if it is often a little weak, gives evidence of the man born with the gift of letters and a mind attuned to poetry; and it

shows, furthermore, and this is no small gift in the poet, the power of close and accurate observation. It contains chiefly poems on things and incidents observed and intellectually considered. And Mr. Symons is thus saved from falling into the slough of that decadence which was in the air when his earliest volume of verse appeared, although poems like 'Satiety,' 'The Opium-Smoker' and 'Night and Wind,' the last perhaps the finest poem in the volume, are tinged with the spirit of the decadents.

Silhouettes (1892) does not differ markedly from its predecessor save that it shows an advance in technical power, and the artifical world of streets, casinos, stage-doors and theatre-stalls, of which Mr. Symons continually writes, is more in evidence. The poems on that banal seaport Dieppe are interesting as a piece of history. Here the makers of the *Yellow Book* and *Savoy* used to gather for their summer holidays and enjoy the place with childish glee and all the sense of novelty in situation of which the schoolgirl is conscious on her first visit abroad. In *Silhouettes* the strongest influence traceable is that of Browning—the poems are cast largely in the form of dramatic monologue. The contents of the volume are hardly of sufficient individuality, they are the work of the imitative youth who exercises himself in the form Browning and Tennyson so largely used.

Reference has been made to the artificial setting of these earlier poems. It is true the second volume contains poems descriptive of nature unspoiled by man, the common sights of earth and sky. But Mr. Symons is not at his best here: he writes as a score or two of his contemporaries might have written. *London Nights* (1895) has, as the title would lead us to expect, less of nature and more of man, and contains some of the poet's best things in this kind. Here also are many voluptuous poems of the dreamer, who lives in the world of the mind and writes with ecstasy of sensuous pleasures, making of these more than the gods have made them to be. One of these poems of transient love closes on a note of half-wistful, half-cynical regret, and a few lines may be quoted as typical of the dreamy intellectualism of Mr. Symons.

"What shall it profit me to know
Your heart holds many a Romeo?
Why should I grieve, though I forget
How many another Juliet?
Let us be glad to have forgot
That roses fade and loves are not,
As dreams, immortal, though they seem
Almost as real as a dream."

(*Stella Maris.*)

Many of these poems are in English what Baudelaire and Verlaine are in French, and the influence of Baudelaire is manifest throughout. Like Verlaine, the mystic and the sensualist are mingled in Mr. Symons, and like Verlaine, who could teach in schools and lecture and even think of farming, Mr. Symons is not without a certain practical sense which emerges from time to time. And, to name another characteristic, the impressionistic painting of lights, faces and passing scenes has scarcely ever been better and more deftly done in verse. Take as an example the poem entitled 'At the Stage-door.'

"Under the archway sheer,
Sudden and black as a hole in the placarded wall,
Faces flicker and veer,
Wavering out of the darkness into the light,
Wavering back into night;
Under the archway, suddenly seen, the curls
And thin, bright faces of girls,
Roving eyes, and smiling lips, and the glance
Seeking, finding perchance,
Here at the edge of the pavement, there by the wall,
One face, out of them all."

Mr. Symons has not the delicate charm of Dowson, but he is a greater poet. Yet the third of his volumes does not entirely fulfil the promise of the second. It is a better book, the young poet has more to say, and he says it better, but lasting poetry cannot be made out of the artificial and lime-lit pleasures of a sophisticated world, and Mr. Symons was too much caught in the net of these things. The poems are works of the night, written in an atmosphere laden with the blue smoke of cigarettes and heavy with the odour of perfumes. And the rhythm

often does not suffice to hold the ear; there is an absence of range and variation in tone.

Amoris Victima (1897) opens with a series of fourteen line poems, not sonnets, which narrate a story of broken love. The series was probably suggested by Meredith's *Modern Love*. Other series of poems in varying metres, entitled 'Amoris Exsul,' 'Amor Triumphans' and 'Mundi Victima' follow. These are the poems of an older man; the voluptuous pieces of the earlier volumes disappear; Mr. Symons still writes of love, unrest and passion, but with greater restraint; the traces of care and diligence in composition are obvious. The note of love's regrets and disillusions harped in the minor key wearies, and this is one of the least arresting of Mr. Symons' volumes in verse. In *Images of Good and Evil* (1899) he reverts to his better manner, and, although the volume as a whole is possibly not so characteristic of the author, its poetry is on a far higher level than most of his work, dealing with the essential things and not with the pirouettings and flaring lights of the music-halls. And in not a few of the poems, notably in the beautiful cadences of 'Palm Sunday: Naples,' the handling of metre is more sure. 'The Old Women' is a poem he has scarcely rivalled elsewhere, and in 'The Dance of the Daughters of Herodias' we have the finest achievement of Mr. Symons in the realm of pure poetry for poetry's sake. The poem is written in rough blank verse, and closes—

> "Dance in the desolate air,
> Dance always, daughters of Herodias,
> With your eternal, white, unfaltering feet,
> But dance, I pray you, so that I from far
> May hear you dancing fainter than the drift
> Of the last petals falling from the rose."

This collection contains also the fine 'Wanderer's Song,' which is not the less attractive because the sentiments—the love of Whitmanesque open-air wandering—are scarcely within the intimate experience of the author.

Scarcely anything written later than *Images of Good and Evil* calls for special remark. *A Book of Twenty Songs* (1905) contains slight lyrics in irregular and varied metres; *The Fool of the World and other Poems* (1906),

contains some work of a higher order, but it is not a volume of any distinction, and in the more sedate poet it is often difficult to recognise the author of *London Nights; Knave of Hearts* (1913) contains a miscellaneous collection of short poems and translations (chiefly from Verlaine), written between the years 1894 and 1908, and adds nothing of significance to his work, representing chiefly verse the author scarcely thought worth the printing in volume form at an earlier date.

Mr. Symons' poetry is rarely wanting in substance. On a first reading this may not always be realised, but closer examination will show that he is always thoughtful, observant and in touch with living human beings. If Dowson's poetry is the poetry of sentiment and mood, Symons' is the poetry of sights, sounds, people studied—the opium-smoker, the absinthe-drinker, the theatre, a woman of the pavements. Mr. Symons is a romanticist, but a romanticist with the gifts of the realist, he sees clearly and observes accurately. His most characteristic work is to be found in *London Nights* and his finest poetry in *Images of Good and Evil:* and these two volumes show him as the poet sensitively critical of his own work. The critical and introspective element is one of the chief limitations of Mr. Symons' poetry. Erotic and sensuous as many of his poems appear, the poet is never rapt in the passion of the moment; his poems of fleshly love do not suggest the overpowering impulse, but an imaginative re-creation by the poet of what might, ought (or perhaps ought not) to have been. And indeed Mr. Symons has confessed that these are renderings of moments imagined rather than of passions experienced, for the poet never surrenders himself to his sensations. The sensation is enjoyed not in the experience, but in the mood of analysis. In these poems there are always two personalities, the psychological pathologist and that other self at whom he is looking. The most constant characteristic of Mr. Symons' poetry is its intense and often morbid psychology and melancholy. Nevertheless, this habit of introspection, the attitude of the critic, render Mr. Symons' poems among the most subtle and exquisite written within the last few decades, although his is a poetry never likely to commend itself to the English temper.

John Davidson has this in common with Mr. Symons, that he began by refusing imaginative idylls to write of the common sights and sounds of the everyday world in which he lived. In other respects he departs widely from Mr. Symons. In his passionate love of strength he compares with W. E. Henley; and in the loud declamations of his materialistic philosophy he stands very much by himself. His poetry is sombre, his life was a tragedy. Endowed like Carlyle, a greater Scotchman, and like Henley, an English contemporary, with a crude admiration of power, he failed in character because he suffered abnormally from that defect of many Scotch minds—a credulous belief in facts. Like Carlyle he was a protagonist of the actual, for in boyhood he had been trained in the strictest sect of the Calvinists, and like Carlyle he spent half his life buffeting the universe as a Calvinist without dogma. He was, as Mr. Filson Young observes, haunted by the shadows of Predestination, Election and Justification. Doctrines he had lost, but a violent assertiveness of temper remained with him, and at the last, soured and embittered with poverty and ill-health, he flung defiance in the face of the powers who created the universe, announcing, "I begin definitely . . . to destroy this unfit world and make it over again in my own image." But even in the twentieth century Prometheus lay bound, the powers of the universe were too strong for Davidson, and he relinquished in suicide the superhuman task of carving out the world afresh in a form nearer to his heart's desire. For Davidson, though a man of genius, was unwise and never discovered himself and the tasks to which he was best fitted. Nevertheless, in the perspective of time, his name begins already to emerge as one of the strongest and most original influences in contemporary English poetry. In sheer force of personality nobody will compare with him. His poetry represents unshrinking fidelity to life and actuality, and in a blundering way it is a reaction from the romantic sentiments of the Victorians toward a classical spirit. But Davidson does not exhibit his classicism in the love of form for its own sake; his poetry is couched in the simplest metres, and these he uses in a rough and ready manner, far more engaged with the

John Davidson, 1857–1909.

saying of what lies in him than the exact form in which he states it.

His early career was chequered. John Davidson was born at Barrhead in Renfrewshire, and at thirteen, his school days over, he entered the chemical laboratory of a business house in Greenock, and in 1871 became assistant to the town analyst. Between 1872 and 1890, when he came up to London, he taught in schools or worked as a clerk for his livelihood. During this time he wrote a number of early dramas, marked with many passages of fine lyric poetry, but wholly without dramatic possibility. Of these the most brilliant is the fantasia, *Scaramouch in Naxos* (1889). In London he tried to earn his living by journalism and the writing of novels. Of his novels the best is the witty and humorous *Perfervid* (1890), which has fallen into unjustifiable neglect.

But poetry was his true means of expression. The volume entitled *In a Music Hall and other Poems* (1891) aims at a direct and realistic painting of ordinary life in verse. " The statement of the present and the creation of the future are the very body and soul of poetry," Davidson once declared. *In a Music Hall* is a statement of the present, but Davidson had not yet found an individual mode of expression, and the poems of this volume are flat and lifeless. He found his voice with *Fleet Street Eclogues* (Two series, 1893–96). The idea was original, the writing strong. Humanity, realism, imagination belong to these easy-going dialogue poems. The beautiful and tender ' Christmas Eve ' of the first series is strangely unlike the violently angry John Davidson of the *Testaments*. His descriptive powers and his use of words in these Eclogues show him to be a poet of the divine calling. His style is simple, plain and unadorned, but for force, cumulative power and pictorial effect Davidson outstrips in passage after passage others who use a larger and more ornate vocabulary.

Ballads and Songs (1894) was his most popular book, and fully deserved to be. In pure poetry it stands for the high-water mark of Davidson's achievement. It contained the splendid ' Ballad of a Nun ' and ' Ballad of Heaven,' in which the force of his simplicity in style is carried to its highest point in ordinary ballad measure.

Almost every stanza has that intensity of emotion which is the soul of poetry. The lines—

> "Sometimes it was a wandering wind,
> Sometimes the fragrance of the pine,
> Sometimes the thought how others sinned,
> That turned her sweet blood into wine."

have been quoted times without number, and they never lose with repetition. In the same volume came 'Thirty Bob a Week' which would never have been written save for Mr. Kipling, but it has Davidson's stronger moral earnestness. And 'A Cinque Port,' though short, is, as a rounded and complete work of art, one of the most perfect poems Davidson ever wrote. It is pensive, grave, severe, yet beautiful. The *New Ballads* (1897) contained work nearly as good in the 'Ballad of a Workman' and in that splendidly imaginative poem, 'A New Ballad of Tannhäuser,' which is, fortunately, not ruined by the didactic aim the poet professes of laying the ghost "that still haunts the world—the idea of the inherent impurity of nature,"—a purpose most readers would never divine without the help of the explanatory note. The title poem of *The Last Ballad* (1899) is more impersonal and less declamatory than Davidson at his worst, but neither it nor the long 'Ordeal' can be counted among his successes. Nor do *Holiday and other Poems* (1906) and *Fleet Street and other Poems* (1909) add anything of value to the earlier work. In the last-named miscellaneous collection the most striking poems are 'Liverpool Street Station,' perhaps the best example of Davidson's use of poetry to state the present, and 'Cain,' which was intended to be the first of a series of five poems to be entitled 'When God meant God.'

Most of the poems in these volumes are in rhyme, but Davidson had long been practising blank verse, and in his later years he wrote a series of *Testaments* beginning with *The Testament of a Vivisector* (1901) and culminating with *The Testament of John Davidson* (1908). The last *Testament* was prefaced by a violent and unbalanced 'Dedication' to the peers temporal of Great Britain and Ireland, in which with the sound of a tempest Davidson set forth his view of Christianity as the seed of decadence,

and rounded off his address with a statement, afterwards repeated in *Fleet Street*, that Man is "the very form and substance of the universe . . . become conscious and self-conscious." He disclaimed the name of philosopher, nor did he admit allegiance to Nietzsche, who, according to Davidson, conceived the image of the Overman only because he came himself of inferior stock. "Such an idea would never occur to an Englishman. The Englishman is the Overman." Nevertheless, although he thrusts Nietzsche contemptuously aside, Davidson preaches a gospel of aristocratic and material power which is scarcely distinguishable from Nietzschean theory. It is difficult to take the *Testaments* seriously—the poet of rare and beautiful genius has sunk into declamatory spasms of denunciation uttered in rhetorical blank verse. The *Testaments* and the two parts of *Mammon* (1907–8), a trilogy incomplete at Davidson's death, are of interest as human documents, but as poetry, or as a philosophy of the universe, they are almost negligible. His war with the Olympian powers is like a buffeting of the air in a rage because the things you wish to smite are not at hand. The vaticinatory mouthings of *The Testament of John Davidson* are fortunately interrupted by passages of irrelevant poetry which gladden the reader's way, and at the close it is a relief to turn the page and reach the epilogue which is worth the whole *Testament* and much more.

> "I felt the world a-spinning on its nave,
> I felt it sheering blindly round the sun;
> I felt the time had come to find a grave:
> I knew it in my heart my days were done.
> I took my staff in my hand; I took the road
> And wandered out to seek my last abode.
> Hearts of gold and hearts of lead,
> Sing it yet in sun and rain,
> 'Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,
> Round the world and home again.'"

Davidson, like Tennyson, was a poet of science: in *Mammon* and the *Testaments* he exalted the dignity and purity of matter, he chanted the psalm of the evolutionary processes, whereby Nature has, at last, made herself self-conscious in Man. He never wearied of repeating the doctrine that Man is but the Universe grown conscious.

The glory of Man is that he quits himself boldly and is strong, living out his life to the fulness in opposition to the decadent altruism of Christianity. Thus Davidson substituted for the forsaken dogmas of Calvinism dogmas of his own, as triumphant, ungraceful and unyielding. His later poetry is the voice of one crying in the wilderness exhorting man to forbear from repentance, to be his own god and kingdom of heaven. Nevertheless, he constantly declared that he came not to supply a new metaphysic or philosophy. "It is a new poetry I begin, a new cosmogony, a new habitation for the imagination of men." And by a new poetry Davidson meant of poetry that it should be a crescive art, a statement of the present and of the future, that it should be a poetry not of pleasant glades, of nightingales, of fair women seated like pensive goddesses in bowers, but a poetry of Fleet Street, of railway stations, of the factory, of the applications of science; and, so far, Davidson may be regarded as the English precursor of Marinetti and the continental poets of Futurism. As the Futurist painter attempts to convey in pigment motion and the combined emotions of artist and spectator, so Davidson attempted to convey in poetry the cosmic emotion conscious of itself in individual men. This was the end of his *Testaments* and tragedies—especially of *The Theatrocrat* (1905).

In later years he found the ornament of rhyme a limitation too narrow to admit the declamatory announcement of this cosmic emotion. In a note appended to *Holiday and other Poems* he writes of a poetry which is, "the will to live and the will to power," a poetry which has found its greatest expression for all time in English blank verse, "the subtlest, most powerful, and most various organ of utterance articulate faculty has produced." In the writing of blank verse he found the greatest satisfaction and joy of his hard and embittered life. Davidson's note 'On Poetry' is often incoherent, but it is a stirring piece of writing, for hardly another poet has declared his faith in accents so rapt and believing as his. Yet it cannot be maintained that his blank verse is of the finest order. Rhetoric is the bane of blank verse, and it caught Davidson in its toils. There are passages, and not a few, wherein he rises to writing as flexible,

melodious and strong as anything in modern poetry, but against these we have to set hundreds of lines of bombast and declamation.

Despite his love for the art of blank verse Davidson will be remembered by a few rhyming ballads, eclogues and short lyrics. And if we judge him only by this narrow selection from his work he must be placed in a small group with poets as dissimilar as Mr. Arthur Symons, Mr. Thomas Hardy and Mr. W. B. Yeats, who have produced something beyond the range of their contemporaries, a poetry that leaves nothing quite as it was before.

William Ernest Henley, 1849–1903.

In his faith in a material world, in his admiration of strength and courage, in a tendency to lapse into declamation, William Ernest Henley is sometimes not unlike Davidson. Davidson's health was poor, at the last he was haunted with the belief that he was a victim of cancer, and it is always to be remembered that Henley was an invalid. His physical disabilities go far to explain his writing.

Henley was educated at the Crypt Grammar School of Gloucester, and grew up under the influence of T. E. Brown who became head master in 1861. From boyhood he suffered from tuberculous disease, which finally necessitated the amputation of a foot, and his 'Hospital Verses' are the record of a period when he lay in the infirmary at Edinburgh. These verses, as might be expected, were rejected by every editor to whom they were submitted. They were published in 1888 as part of the *Book of Verses*. His other chief volumes of verse, written in the intervals of driven journalistic work, were *The Song of the Sword* (1892), which contained the 'London Voluntaries' and was re-christened by that name in a second edition, *Hawthorn and Lavender* (1899), and *For England's Sake* (1900).

The volume of 1888 brought Henley some recognition in England and perhaps more immediate fame in America. The best of its contents were 'In Hospital' and the 'Bric-à-brac' poems. The interest of 'In Hospital' for us is the personality of Henley rather than these rough-hewn and unrhymed verses. And, beyond this, their

highest merit is their realistic rendering of the atmosphere of the sick-ward, the operating theatre, the silent figures of nurse, student and house surgeon coming and going. The tense stillness broken by stertorous moans, the smell of anæsthetics and drugs, the footfalls in the night and whispered consultations of nurses, these are all reproduced with astonishing fidelity. In the illusion of reality Henley achieves complete success. In the words of Mr. Arthur Symons, "Here is poetry made out of personal sensations, poetry which is half physiological, poetry which is pathology—and yet essentially poetry." Judged as poetry the finest of these pieces is the last—'Discharged.' In this there is something of a finer inspiration which Henley did not often reach. And typical of this collection are those poems which sketch individuals —the staff-nurse, the lady probationer, the house-surgeon, the scrubber, and best of all, the well-known 'Apparition' with its portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson.

In mastery of metre and in beauty of imagery the important contents of Henley's second volume are the 'London Voluntaries.' The easy movement and loose rhyming arrangement of these poems give them a peculiar flexibility and admirably adapt them to the purpose of describing London in her moods. And in felicity of thought, epithet and phrase Henley is at his best. When he writes that though a hundred years hence other lovers will be where we are now,

> "But being dead, we shall not grieve to die,"

he expresses an old thought with a simplicity and directness which gives to it new life. And among memorable epithets and descriptive phrases we have the river "new-mailed in morning," the "golden-coasted sky" of evening, the wind "slouching, sullen and obscene" along the streets. The 'London Voluntaries' probably cost Henley more pains to produce than any other part of his writing. *Hawthorn and Lavender*, upon the other hand, is not a book in which we find him at his best. These poems of the south coast, of Sussex Downs and lanes, too strongly suggest the overworked journalist spending a well-earned holiday, surprised at his leisure and hardly knowing how to use it save in a rollicking tramp along the roads, improvising

scattered staves of song upon flowers and winds and clouds. It is all a little boisterous and violent, disturbing the silence. He shouts—

> "Sound, Sea of England, sound and shine,
> Blow, English Wind, amain,
> Till in this old, gray heart of mine
> The Spring need wake again."

A few songs like this have their use after reading Tennyson and the languid—

> "Heavily hangs the broad sun-flower,
> Heavily hangs the tiger-lily,"—

but the collection of some seventy pages makes us regret our evening walk with a companion whose voice is so strident, who is so obviously out to enjoy himself. The poems too strongly suggest the man resolved to persuade himself he is enjoying life, and his conception of a good time is typically Anglo-Saxon—something a little noisy. And so Henley finds it in him to write of autumn's "exquisite chromatics of decay," a phrase which suggests nothing so much as the oily discolourations of a noisome pool. But sometimes he redeems himself and shows that his violence was largely an affectation by which he deceived himself into forgetting that his life was one of pain and hard struggle. The poems beginning 'Look down, dear eyes, look down' and 'Come where my Lady lies' are of another order. In these we are nearer to the innermost mind of Henley than in any part of the two preceding volumes.

For England's Sake (1900) was his contribution to the outbreak of patriotic poetry excited by the Boer War, and it was but natural that Henley with his faith in the material event should have written as he did. These poems, however, add nothing to his reputation; for the patriotic song, like the church hymnary, appeals to an instinct other than the faculty of poetry. With the exception of—

> "What have I done for you,
> England, my England?"

Henley's last volume is not much above the range of good journalistic verse-writing.

The finer breath of poetry did not lie within the borders of Henley's genius. He is a singer who only transposes his key by an accident; his common method is to sing of himself and his daring, passionate enjoyment of life. But Kingsley, Henley, Stevenson protest too loudly the joy of life to convince us that they found it easy to be happy; too often they speak like men attempting to persuade themselves against their better judgment. Henley praises the generous gods for life, like the preacher who doubts that his congregation follow his doctrine, and, scarcely sure of it himself, he falls back upon his "unconquerable soul," for which again, and unnecessarily, he thanks the gods. He is a better poet, and, it may be added, a wiser man, when he is less defiant.

"Shall we not take the ebb who had the flow?
Life was our friend. Now, if it be our foe—
Dear, though it spoil and break us!—need we care
What is to come?"

"Let the great winds their worst and wildest blow,
Or the gold weather round us mellow slow:
We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can dare
And we can conquer, though we may not share
In the rich quiet of the afterglow
What is to come."

That is Henley at his best in mood, wisdom and poetry.

Henley's finest gift was an ear for the melody of words, and in this he was not unerring, nor did he always strive for perfection. Many of his Ballades, Vilanelles, and the irregular rhythms of 'London Voluntaries' give pleasure for their deftness and happy choice of words. Nor could anything in the mere technique of some of the short 'Bric-à-brac' poems be bettered. The double ballade of 'Life and Fate' has the note of Villon; "While the west is paling" is an exquisite snatch of song caught from the slight stir of the evening air. Yet the poet in Henley never sinks beneath the craftsman. As a poet, however, his range is narrow; his imaginative powers are of the simplest; he frequently repeats his ideas and images; and, often as he sounded the trumpet calling to life, he had few ideas about living beyond the need of love and courage to endure. For Henley's chronic invalidism

shaped his ideas and poetry. 'In Hospital' is more than a story of the poet's days in the Edinburgh infirmary—it is the picture of a soul. Like Scott and Stevenson he was incapacitated for the active life to which he was born by temperament, and therefore the more was he lured on by the "bright eyes of danger." The hospital verses are a story of adventure in the surgeon's den, 'Bric-à-brac,' 'Echoes,' 'Rhymes and Rhythms,' poems of his soul's adventures in a world of pain shot with gleams of love and happiness. 'A Song of Speed' chants the novel adventure of riding in a motor-car. Like his friend Stevenson, Henley is the child lost in the fair

"Dreaming, desiring, possessing,"

and trying bravely to laugh away weariness and fear.

Rudyard Kipling, b. 1865.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling's early verse, like much of Henley's, was merely part of his work as a journalist and editor. Like Henley he grows noisy in his glorification of physical courage and the prowess of the English, and, at the worst, his patriotism sinks beneath Henley's into an "underbred swagger and brawling imperialism." Yet Mr. Kipling, conscious of the English race far-flung over the surface of the earth, has the foundations of his imperialistic gospel deeply-seated. He has not been guiltless of foolish noise, but he is not the writer of empty jingo ditties: for, born in India, he has travelled widely throughout the English-speaking world, and his mind is strongly imbued with a consciousness of the group-soul of the race to which he belongs. The British Empire is not only a physical fact to Mr. Kipling, it is a psychic phenomenon and a natural religion. And he is more typically English than Henley, the pagan, for he accepts the gods of his country and the doctrines of Old Testament Christianity.

Mr. Kipling's connection with India in early manhood has everything to do with the cast of his thought and the character of his writing, whether in prose or verse. He returned to India, when his school days were over, and formed a connection with the editorial staffs of the Lahore *Civil and Military Gazette* (1882–87) and the Allahabad *Pioneer* (1887–89); and to these papers he contributed

satirical verse, sketches and short stories of Indian life. And although he has written of every corner of the earth the best of his work, especially in prose, is that set with an Indian background. Yet the light verse of *Departmental Ditties* (1886) has an interest too restricted to make any wide appeal. They may still be read by the Anglo-Indian, and they are sometimes slightly amusing to his brother in England, but the humour is of the character named "family," and at a distance loses its point. As satirical verse these ditties take no high place: Mr. Kipling is out-distanced by at least a dozen men in the last half-century from Thackeray to Sir Owen Seaman, and he shows no special faculty in one grace of this kind of writing—extravagances of metre and rhyme.

Before the publication of *Barrack-room Ballads* (1892) snatches of verse under that name appeared as epigraphs to some of Mr. Kipling's tales; later Henley printed many of the ballads in the *National Observer*, and in due course they appeared in volume form to meet with an instantaneous and phenomenal popularity hardly equalled since Scott, Byron, Tupper and Montgomery. *Barrack-room Ballads* was divided into two parts, and, as Mr. Richard le Gallienne pointed out twenty years ago, whereas there can be no doubt of the success of the swinging ballads in soldier dialect (better handled here than in the Mulvaney stories) the 'Other Verses' are comparatively dull and uninspired. The artifice of Macaulay's verse is too transparent and obvious to charm us a second time, and 'With Scindia to Delhi,' 'The King's Mercy,' and even the oft-praised 'Ballad of East and West,' although they do not lack vigour, only serve to remind us how much better Macaulay did these things. The whole of this section is wanting in the personality of the author and in genuine poetry; and pieces like 'An Imperial Rescript' and 'The Ballad of Boh da Thone' are almost stupidly weak. 'L'Envoi,' which closes the section, alone has the breath of true poetry and is worthy of better precursors. Very different is it with the twenty poems of 'Barrack-room Ballads.' The matter is unequal, but only one or two need be set aside. 'Snarleyow' with its repulsive goriness is a poem that ought never to have been written. Its theme may be true: but of some subjects, if we must

speak, we speak in whispers for the sake of our common humanity. The blundering falseness of thought and sentiment in 'Soldier, Soldier' is a discredit to the author. But four swinging and racy ballads in soldier dialect, 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy,' 'Gunga-Din,' 'Oonts' and 'Mandalay,' are almost a new kind of poetry, and scarcely below them come 'Ford o' Kabul River' and 'The Young British Soldier.' 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy,' with its lolloping refrain, is perhaps no great achievement, but an individual one, and offers a good example of Mr. Kipling's swing.

"So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your home in the Soudan;
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;
An' 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, with your 'ayrick head of 'air—
You big black boundin' beggar—for you broke a British square!"

'Mandalay' is by far the finest poem in the collection. The slow rhythmical rise and fall of the lines reminds us of the pathetic tenseness of plain-song chant, and the poet has wonderfully transfigured common thoughts and common words. It is the crystallisation into poetry of a mood in the vulgar mind of a cockney, who has never seen the Orient so clearly as when away and at a distance. Were we to question everything else Mr. Kipling has written, 'Mandalay' ranks him with the poets. In the poetry of commonplace thought nothing could surpass this—

"'Er petticoat was yallar an' 'er little cap was green,
An' 'er name was Sapi-yaw-lat—jes' the same as Theebaw's Queen,
An' I seed her first a-smokin' of a whackin' white cheeroot,
An' a-wasting Christian kisses on an' 'eathen idol's foot:
Bloomin' idol made o' mud—
Wot they call the Great God Budd—
Plucky lot she cared for idols when I kissed 'er where she stud!

On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flying-fishes play,
And the dawn comes up like thunder
Out o' China 'cross the bay."

The defects of all these poems are those which inhere in all Mr. Kipling's work—crudity of sentiment, bluster, loud shouting, and an inability to resist the temptation to garish effects. But, if we are content not to expect the note of finer poetry, it cannot be denied that in their

genre the *Barrack-room Ballads* are an achievement. They and their successors in the later volumes have probably been imitated by budding poets more often than any modern verse. And the fact that Mr. Kipling can be imitated, so that the copy is scarcely distinguishable from the original, is a measure of his quality.

The Seven Seas (1896), beside the poems which give a title to the volume, contain a further selection of 'Barrack-room Ballads,' including the truly beautiful 'Mary, Pity Women,' that splendid song of *reiselust*, 'For to Admire,' and more ballads with the rollicking swing of the earlier collection—'Cholera Camp,' 'The 'Eathen' and 'The Shut-eye Sentry.' None of these is quite as good as the best ballads of the earlier series, neither is anything in *The Seven Seas* on the same plane as 'Mandalay,' nor anything as bad as the worst things in the first 'Barrack-room Ballads': the level of workmanship is, in general, better sustained. Three poems stand distinctively before the others—the two dramatic monologues, 'M'Andrews' Hymn' and 'The Mary Gloster,' and that stirring ballad 'The Rhyme of the Three Sealers,' which tells the story of a fight between sealing boats in the cold fogs of the North Pacific. 'The Rhyme of the Three Sealers' is an epic in ballad form, the ballad of the long anapæstic and iambic line, and renders in poetry the thoughts and lives of rough seamen with a vigour and truth which makes the poem one of Mr. Kipling's greatest pieces of writing. The anvil and heavy hammer attempts of Mr. Masefield and his imitators to get the common thought of common people into verse is the merest bungling beside these lines, in which the rough sealing skipper bids farewell to life as he lies wounded on the deck—

"He'll have no more of the crawling sea that made him suffer so,
But he'll lie down on the killing-grounds where the holluschickie go.
And west you'll sail and south again, beyond the sea-fog's rim,
And tell the Yoshiwara girls to burn a stick for him."

The last line with its naïve revelation of the man's moral standard is one of those inspired flashes of character drawing which Mr. Kipling strikes now and again. The first of the dramatic monologues, 'M'Andrews' Hymn,'

reveals the character of an old Scots engineer and is, at the same time, a song of steam and machinery. For the other, 'The Mary Gloster,' it may be said that it would be impossible, whether in prose or verse, to find elsewhere in Mr. Kipling's work a painting of character stronger, more exact and more convincing than this drawing in his own words of the life and personality of the coarse and successful shipowner, who lies on his death-bed, talking in mingled moods of cynicism, contempt and earnestness to his idle, luxurious and effete son. "Actuality" is the word often used of Mr. Kipling's work, and never with better reason than of 'The Mary Gloster.'

In the 'Song of the English,' which opens *The Seven Seas*, Mr. Kipling blows the trumpet of imperialism loudly, but without any of the vulgar flourishes with which he is often indiscriminately credited. It would be beside the mark to pretend that he always avoids shallow jingoism; for he appears sincerely to entertain the belief that Englishmen and Anglo-Saxon colonials are better than all foreigners. In this simple faith he wrote the early soldier stories and the verse of the *Barrack-room Ballads;* and in *The Five Nations* (1903), inspired, like Henley, by the Boer War, he assumes the mantle of a prophet of empire. In justice to Mr. Kipling it ought, however, to be kept in mind that his imperialistic exhortations are as often as not as strongly denunciatory of faithlessness and the transgressing of the law as are the chapters of Isaiah.

"Keep ye the Law—be swift in all obedience—
Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford.
Make ye sure to each his own
That he reap where he hath sown;
By the peace among Our peoples let men know we serve the Lord."

The famous gibe at "the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goal" is only one of a series of ironical casts at the complacent superiority of the insular mind; the prosy slang of 'The Lesson,' which drives home the moral of our discredit in South Africa, can hardly be counted a eulogy of British efficiency; and the 'Recessional' of 1897 reads like the admonition of a

Jeremiah in khaki. The jingoism of Mr. Kipling lies not so much in anything he writes as in the magnificent assumption that Anglo-Saxons may make mistakes, may sin against their Law and their God, but at the worst the strong inclination of Jehovah is to support the English whenever possible. Our virtues are our own, our follies are such as

> "——the Gentiles use
> Or lesser breeds without the law."

The worship Mr. Kipling pays in his temple has been well described as "a rather morbid version of Judaism."

The volume of 1903 contains nothing that could add to Mr. Kipling's immediate popularity or enduring fame. In the memorial verses to C. J. Rhodes he reaches a restrained dignity which is not frequent with him; and 'Sussex,' a poem in praise of the county he has adopted for his own, has a distinction in the fine simplicity of its English. Even Mr. Hilaire Belloc has written nothing as good of his beloved county. 'The Truce of the Bear,' in which "Matun, the old blind beggar" tells the story of his mauling by "Adam-Zad, the Bear," is set apart from the other poems of the volume in its mystical emotion and pathetic intensity. The impulse to chant the romance of steam, commerce and machinery appears in the personifications of 'The Bell Buoy,' 'Cruisers' and 'The Destroyers.' But neither here, nor in the 'Service Songs' of the same collection, which are dull and spiritless, is there anything which reaches the level of the best things in the earlier volumes.

The Boer War had an ill effect on art and literature; and Mr. Kipling was among those who suffered most—nearly all his better writing in verse antedates the war, for since that time he has been too conscious of his prophetic call to cry aloud and spare not. This was the more natural because he has never dissociated poetry from journalism, and latterly his poems have appeared in the newspapers like verse leaders on important topics of the day. Mr. Kipling is the poet of empire, colonial expansion and commercial activity, as these things were imagined and believed by the great mass of the English at the close of the nineteenth century; and he is therefore almost wholly

a poet to his contemporaries; nearly all his verse writing is cramped by limitations of time and place, and of simple and essential poetry there is less to be found in him than might be hoped. A like statement holds true of a great part of his prose work; the faults and the virtues are in either case the same, and it will be more possible to estimate Mr. Kipling as a whole in another chapter. As a poet he is emphatically of an age. His popularity and his credit have already waned. But in his place he is important as a finger-post pointing the way, indicative of much in a literary phase. And that he has a true but limited genius as a poet is manifest, for he was more inspired when he wrote 'Mandalay,' 'The Three Sealers' and 'The Mary Gloster' than in any part of his prose.

§ 2

The close of the century is not without other names of distinction among poets who had either ceased to write before its last year or had by that time published all that is essential to our knowledge of their work. If they are here set apart from others named in this chapter the differentiation implies not necessarily a lesser poetic genius, but an influence less marked upon the impulses and tendencies of poetry in our own time. Although Sir William Watson, Ernest Dowson, William Sharp and Francis Thompson suffer little and often gain in a comparison with the poets whom we have named earlier in the chapter, they have not in a perceptible degree directed any recent trend in poetry. In 'Wordsworth's Grave' and 'Lacrimæ Musarum' Sir William Watson has written two noble elegies, but he is in the following of Milton, Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold, and only slightly a man of his generation; the slender and beautiful lyrical genius of Dowson was not of a nature to extend its influence far; Francis Thompson was a poet from the world of books and Catholic mysticism; and William Sharp was the poet of an eerie and somewhat affected Celtic mysticism. And thus for differing reasons these four illustrate no clear relation to their time, save that Dowson belonged to the group of the *Yellow Book*, and the poetry of Sharp is one

facet in the Celtic Renaissance. But these two links are weak and of no special moment.

Sir William Watson, b. 1858.

The volume containing *The Prince's Quest* (1880) appeared nearly forty years since. Oddly enough, as it is one of Sir William Watson's earliest, it is also his longest poem. The *motif* is that underlying the *Hymn of Bardaisan*, Shelley's *Alastor*, and many another of the world's poems—the quest of the soul's ideal. It is his only poem which exhibits any vagueness in thought and form, and is obviously inspired by Shelley while betraying echoes from Tennyson. The metre employed—five-foot iambic couplets—moves slowly, the poet is not wholly at his ease in it, and the poem as a whole announces its immaturity. His genius first found definite expression four years later in his *Epigrams of Art, Life and Nature* (1884). The terse and chiselled form of the epigram was scarcely the favourite child of the times, and its revival by a young poet showed at least a courage to stand aloof and work out his own salvation. He disclaims all intention of conforming to the popular conception of the epigram, and chooses rather to emulate "the nobler sort of epigram"—that is, the single thought on art, life or nature, pointedly and concisely expressed. In this sense all great poetry (and all great prose) will contain epigrams; though the epigram in itself can never be a high form of the poetic art. But the interest of Sir William Watson's venture, so far as he is concerned, is that it has given to all his subsequent writing a terse and sententious character.

The Prince's Quest, and the shorter poems of that volume, together with the book of *Epigrams*, gave evidence of a genuine poetical faculty combined with a fine command of reserved and dignified English, which it was good to see at a time when the tendency ran, as it still does, to a careless enlargement of the borders of poetical vocabulary. The author's ideal of poetic form and diction was from the first rigidly exacting. His early volumes displayed a self-control and reserve remarkable in a young man. But, as a poet of wider reach and feeling, he first showed the range of his powers with *Wordsworth's Grave*, written between 1884 and 1887, a poem which

attracted universal admiration for its simple form and dignity of phrase. The comparison with Milton, which the poem suggested to more than one critic, was something more than an overflow of contemporary feeling. In *Wordsworth's Grave* we find the same intellectual passion for the commanding word and phrase and the inevitable epithet, which belonged to Milton; and the lines move slowly, as to "a solemn music." The manner, the diction, and the music of the poem are exactly fitted to the subject, and, despite the contrary opinion of the few, in the judgment of the majority of those who read poetry at all it will remain as Sir William Watson's finest poem.

In the order of elegiac poetry he followed *Wordsworth's Grave* with *Lacrimæ Musarum* (1892), written after the death of Tennyson. This is his most beautiful, warmly-coloured and melodious poem. The loose metre of the ode, though faulty in the first version, was revised later and given that seeming artlessness which is the fruit of perfect art; and imagery combines with thought to sustain the poem on a plane worthy of its theme. The natural tendency of Sir William Watson to finished terseness and rounded completeness in short phrases disappears, and the falling music of the lines flows across the mind conveying the direct and subtle communication of emotion. We do not stop, as we are inclined to do in *Wordsworth's Grave*, to dwell upon the single thought or isolated image. The opening passage of the elegy could not be bettered, either in the poetic imagery of its thought or in the fitting stress it lays upon the oneness of Tennyson and his poetry with the racial consciousness of the land to which he belonged. In his other more noteworthy elegies, 'In Laleham Churchyard' and 'The Tomb of Burns,' Sir William Watson returns to the concise and epigrammatic manner.

It is in the elegy, the ode and the quasi-philosophical poem that Sir William Watson's muse finds her fittest sphere of song; it is in these that he stands differentiated from other poets of his time; and for this reason the common comparison with Wordsworth has its meaning, although he wholly lacks Wordsworth's interest in the apparently commonplace. He is not obsessed with a belief in the enormous importance of little things, but

inclines to display, on the contrary, a manner which is almost irritatingly superior. General conceptions rather than everyday trifles appear in the mirror which he holds up to life. But that, after a short discipleship to Shelley, Sir William Watson conceived a deep and lasting reverence for Wordsworth, it is needless to say. The reason is not far to seek. If the emotion of the pure lyric is spontaneous and unsought, the inspiration of elegiac poetry, using the words in their widest connotation, is thought touched with emotion. And it is here that he finds a point of contact with Wordsworth. Wordsworth was not one for whom poetry was an inrush which came to him wholly unbidden; poetry was for him "emotion recollected in tranquillity," and that is why he was never able wholly to distinguish between his hours of inspiration and the days when he wrote poetry as a poet by profession. Sir William Watson knows that his is not "the facile largess of a stintless muse," but

> "A fitful presence seldom tarrying long,
> Capriciously she touches me to song."

The character of the larger part of his poetry is "emotion recollected in tranquillity." Apart from the elegies, the ode, the philosophical poem and the sonnet, with its exacting rules, are the forms most naturally fitted to the character of his genius. On another plane we may add his political poetry, which can hardly have more than an ephemeral interest, and his few short satires, which, for point and venom, can scarcely be surpassed. Among his finer odes are the splendidly sonorous 'Hymn to the Sea' and 'England my Mother'; and of his quasi-philosophical poems the most distinctive are 'The Hope of the World' and 'The Unknown God.' In the two poems last named he appears as an egotistic rebel, defying the order of the universe on his own account. And this is a mistake, for, as Epictetus pointed out long ago, it is better for a man to confine himself to the things which lie in his power. It is this self-centred attitude which hampers Sir William Watson as a poet. He is not lyrical because he cannot place himself in other situations with a subjective and imaginative sympathy. And this faculty lies at the root of all dramatic and lyrical achievement. If,

however, his genius does not express itself naturally in lyric song, he has written a few short lyrics of supreme beauty. The following stanzas, which bear no title, form a lyric poem with the integral purity of clear crystal—

"Thy voice from inmost dreamland calls;
The wastes of sleep thou makest fair;
Bright o'er the ridge of darkness falls
The cataract of thy hair."

"The morn renews its golden birth:
Thou with the vanquished night dost fade;
And leav'st the ponderable earth
Less real than thy shade."

And there are a few other short poems of a true lyrical character.

Sir William Watson's *New Poems* (1909) cannot be said to add anything of real importance to his earlier work, with the exception of that splendid ode in unrhymed verse, 'Wales: A Greeting.' This volume and the next miscellaneous collection, *The Muse in Exile* (1913), came as a disappointment. Some of the pieces in the last volume hardly rise above a better type of light doggerel, and in longer poems, 'Part of my Story' for example, he drops into trite prose. In the poems of the two last collections the lines are parched and dry; rapture there is hardly any; emotion of any kind is often difficult to find. He has driven his own ideal of sculptured and statuesque beauty in form and diction to an extreme, and anything like vital emotion has been strangled in the birth. In tranquillity he has evidently found it difficult to remember his moments of emotion.

The genius of Sir William Watson is elegiac rather than lyrical, and the abstracted emotion of his poetry has prompted the comment, which often appears in print, and is no less often heard from the average reader, that he has not enough passion for a poet. This is not only false in itself, but it displays an extraordinary ineptness. It is true that poetry is in danger when it loses touch with physical life and strays into the region of things purely intellectual; but the lyric of the mind may be as genuinely moving and real as the lyric of human passion, hope or disillusion.

Perhaps the finest lyric in our language, Milton's ode 'On Time,' has no single concrete idea on which we can seize —time is only a convention of the mind—and the sphere in which the thought moves is wholly mental; yet few poems are more profoundly moving. And to those who level at him the accusation that his art is cold Sir William Watson retorts that

> "in man's life
> Is room for great emotions unbegot
> Of dalliance and embracement, unbegot
> Ev'n of the purer nuptials of the soul."

Among living English poets he stands by himself with a collection of poetry which is not closely comparable in character with that of any of his contemporaries. The distinctive position he has won for himself he owes to the consistent faith with which he has pursued a method, style and ideal he evolved in early youth. That style, the return to classic restraint and dignity, was hardly in the ascendant when he adopted it; but he followed it with individual conviction. He has written slowly, at intervals, and with elaborate care, refusing to print a line which did not satisfy his own ideals of artistic form and the traditions of great poetry. Only in his later volumes has his power of self-judgment completely deserted him. We do not look in his work for colour, warmth and lyric passion; for the emotion of his poetry is abstract and intellectual, of the mind not of the heart. He belongs to no school or coterie of his time, and as a poet remains isolated.

Ernest Dowson, 1867–1900.

Oscar Wilde alleged as a law that art cannot surrender its imaginative medium to life or nature without losing itself, and Mr. Arthur Symons propounds the same thesis in another form when he asserts that art is but an escape from life—a means of forgetting. The poetry of Ernest Dowson is an illustration of the poet seeking in his art a door of escape from sordid reality. Gentle, sensitive, wistful, Dowson went out of his way to live amid evil surroundings. He took his supper in cabmen's shelters; he received by legacy an old dock in the East End, and there he lived for a time in a crumbling shed,

drinking at night in the squalid pothouses of the district; in Paris he frequented the questionable purlieus of Les Halles. He was never more at his ease than in an environment beneath him. His only happiness lay in blindness to the present moment. He loved with "shy and eager devotion" the daughter of a foreign restaurant keeper. When she disappeared for the evening his only desire was to kill another night in drink. Fortunately she married the waiter.

The desire for drink was the ruin of a rare and beautiful personality. Gentle and sensitive when sober Dowson became another man in his cups, gave way to foul and abusive language and entirely lost control of himself.

Physically fragile, retiring and shy, without ambition, writing fastidiously to please himself, with hardly a thought of that vulgar creature, the public, Dowson never lived, as ordinary men count living. But, although there is nothing strong or assertive in his three small volumes of verse, once known the impress does not easily slip from the memory, for there is something of the inner spirit of poetry in everything he wrote. Yet the content is slight, the meaning negligible. His poems are pure fantasies, the reflected mood of a moment—they appeal by beauty of form, grace of thought and felicity of music. He quoted as his ideal a line from Poe—

"The viol, the violet and the vine,"

declaring his belief that "v" was the most beautiful of consonants and could not be used too often. A true poetical inspiration and a critical fastidiousness united to give to Dowson's verse its peculiar qualities. He never mistook his limitations. He was not tempted to astonish or write the epic. He knew that to please, to grace a transient sentiment, to paint beautifully the streaks of the tulip, could be his only achievement. Unhappy weaknesses the gods had showered upon him: they did not withhold the highest of their gifts—self-knowledge. He made no painful and tiresome efforts—the vice of the twentieth century—at startling originality, but adopted with perfect naturalness the old and well-worn phrases

and images, recognising that what has often been used is thereby shown worthy of use again.

> "Ah, Lalage! while life is ours,
> Hoard not thy beauty rose and white,
> But pluck the pretty, fleeting flowers
> That deck our little path of light."

The study of Dowson's poetry in chronological order is disconcerting. Chronology, it has been said, has nothing to do with a writer's work. This assertion is one of the most stupid ever seriously made. Powers of intellect and genius are not exempt from the malignity of circumstance and the ravages of time. There is no better method of learning to know an author than to begin at the beginning and read through to the end. The course of his development is thus seen like the arc of a circle; we trace its rise and fall. All that is best in Dowson, indeed all that justifies his claim to more than the briefest notice, is contained in his *Verses* (1896). This was followed by *The Pierrot of a Minute* (1897), illustrated by Beardsley, and *Decorations* (1899). *The Pierrot of a Minute*, a one act play in dainty heroic measure, has favour and prettiness, but this slight sketch of the fantastic loves of a moon maiden and a pierrot in the gardens of the Trianon scarcely calls for comment or a second reading. Few could have touched it with the grace with which Dowson adorns his theme; but even as a fantasy it fails, for it has no atmosphere. It suggests the desk rather than twilight shadows in sheltered garden ways. In *Decorations* Dowson repeats himself and falls much below the level of *Verses*. One poem, 'Breton Afternoon,' must, however, be singled out, both because it does not suffer by comparison with the first volume and because in its concluding lines we have an apt commentary on the poet's personality.

> "Mother of God, O Misericord, look down in pity on us,
> The weak and blind who stand in our light and wreak ourselves such ill."

The cry comes directly from Dowson's heart.

Dowson was a weak poet, unable to sustain his flight, sinking quickly after a few short years of poetic inspira-

tion; and to read his volumes consecutively is to trace not growth but failure in power. His genius was clouded by drink and weakness of will. In view of the very restricted character of his output, the briefness of his period of true inspiration and the slightness of thought and imagination in his poetry, it may be questioned whether by some Dowson has not been ranked too high. In like manner Coleridge's period of poetic inspiration falls within a few months, but his work is supremely great. Nobody would make a like claim for Dowson; perhaps few would give him a distinctive place with secondary poets. On the other hand, it may safely be asserted that few are likely to care for Dowson who do not care for the finer breath of pure poetry, a poetry which rests nothing upon its content and all upon its melody, mood and form.

Dowson is an example of the weakness of will and intellect characteristic of some of the French romantic and symbolist poets of the last century. His ordinary mood is a melancholy, the melancholy of the weak man of scholarly and precise instincts. All the finer poetry of *Verses* is tinged with sadness. It is the note of tender regret for things which may never be again which gives an exquisite beauty of sentiment and music to 'In Tempore Senectutis'—

> "When I am old,
> And sadly steal apart,
> Into the dark and cold,
> Friend of my heart!
> Remember, if you can,
> Not him who lingers, but that other man,
> Who loved and sang, and had a beating heart,—
> When I am old!"

Beautiful too in the same mood is 'Amantium Iræ,' and in 'Impenitentia Ultimæ' Dowson has again given us one of those glimpses into his heart so frequent in his work—

> "For, Lord, I was free of thy flowers, but I chose the world's sad roses."

The one distinctively strong poem of the volume has the same note of regret and disillusion. In 'Non sum qualis

eram bonæ sub regno Cynaræ' the reticence which commonly marks Dowson's verse is lost, and for once he writes with fire and passion. Nothing else in his work is quite like this. Only one other poet living at the time could have written thus, and only occasionally did Swinburne reach greater melody and more powerful words.

"I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion.
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion."

Of the poets whose work appeared in the *Yellow Book*, who won a name at that time or in the later 'nineties, for purity and charm of poetic gift, none, save Mr. Arthur Symons, can be compared to Dowson. And few have achieved so much upon so narrow a margin of imaginative and intellectual power. His opposite is to be found in John Davidson, who had imagination and strength sufficient to have compassed greater work than any he has left behind him. The story of Ernest Dowson is the tragedy of a nature too weak for the circumstances of life, that of Davidson the tragedy of a strong nature hampered by a weak environment.

William Sharp, 1855–1905.

The prose romances of William Sharp are of greater moment than his poetry, but in the ten years, 1882–91, he published in verse under his own name four volumes, *The Human Inheritance*, *Earth's Voices*, *Romantic Ballads and Poems of Phantasy*, and the unrhymed poems in irregular metre entitled *Sospiri di Roma*. These contain fluent, ready, impressionistic, not peculiarly original verse. A large element of the feminine mingled in Sharp's nature, and in all his work there is that facility and comparative neglect of perfect form characteristic of much feminine writing. In his anxiety not to miss the mood of the moment he adopts a lax and over-abundant use of words, and often fails to utter his thought. At his worst he becomes weakly verbose.

Nor do these faults disappear from the single volume of poetry, *From the Hills of Dream* (1896), which belongs to that other side of his life, when, as 'Fiona Macleod,'

he became the magician and seer of Celtic myth, mysticism and superstition. Neither by environment nor training had Sharp, who belonged to the manufacturing district of Paisley, the dreamy and mystical character of the Celt imparted to him. But in later life he developed an extraordinary faculty for absorbing the eerie, especially as it found expression in the lives and speech of islanders off the west coast of Scotland. Even so he remains, as in his earlier work, superficial. His prose and verse, written under the pseudonym of Fiona Macleod, contain deft impressionistic glimpses of Celtic mysticism, and not, to state an obvious contrast, the inherent mysticism of a whole personality belonging to A. E., Mr. W. B. Yeats and other Irish poets. For he lived in a dream of ideal beauty rather than in an impulse of genuine spiritual mysticism. He chose as a maxim in life: "To live in beauty—which is to put in four words all the dream and spiritual effort of the soul of man." And *From the Hills of Dream* sought to imprison in words the transient gleams of beauty, of love, of spiritual emotion, which visit the mind to fleet away in the selfsame moment. The result is an artificial and even level of ecstasies. These poems are beautiful, they are emotional, they have an atmosphere of the unearthly, but they lack substance and diversity. Miss Eva Gore-Booth writes, especially in *The One and the Many*, a poetry as mystical and otherworldly as Fiona Macleod's, and a poetry with genuine thinking and true content to which Sharp can make no pretence. But if no poetry can endure long without matter as well as large utterance, poetry may breathe and live on lower levels by virtue of beauty in imagery and expression. And these virtues the prose poems and verse of *From the Hills of Dream* possess; and, further, they have in an extraordinary degree what H. D. Traill, in speaking of Fiona Macleod's work, well described as "the fascination of 'atmosphere.'" They reveal that Celtic and mystical side of the Scotch nature which marked the work of an earlier and greater Scotch writer, George Macdonald (1824–1905), who died in the same year as William Sharp. Even in our day there can come out of Scotland other things than the kailyard school has painted.

Francis Thompson was another poet of mystic aspiration who was neither a great poet nor a profound mystic. But in his case we do not feel, as with Fiona Macleod, that his mysticism is a cultivated and carefully nurtured mood —it is an integral element of the poet's nature, though hardly an overpowering conviction.

Francis Thompson, 1860–1907.

The order in which Thompson's poems were published evidently does not follow the order of composition, for at first he wrote poetry in poverty and destitution, finding no publisher. His father, who was a doctor, educated his son at Owen's College, Manchester, for the practice of medicine; but Thompson soon abandoned all thought of a professional career for poetry and opium in London. Years of misery followed till he was given a home by Mr. and Mrs. Wilfrid Meynell, who saw to the publication in 1893 of his *Poems*. *Sister Songs* (1895) and *New Poems* (1897), which followed, contain, in general, greater poetry than the first volume. There is little need in Thompson's case, however, to follow any chronological method. In splendour of phrase no poet since Keats has rivalled Thompson, and in his verse there is a reminder of the cadence and regal grandeur of Milton's prose. And, further, the tricks of Keats are all here—the coinage of new words, the use of substantives for verbs and the passion for the double epithet, which in phrases like "flame-chorded psalterion" and "tawny-hided desert" the younger poet uses with splendid effect. Too often, however, he drops into pedantic and almost vulgar Latinisms. The line—

> "Sublimed the illuminous and volute redundance"

has become a byword of ridicule, and the inflated periods of 'To Monica Thought Dying' wholly fail to touch us. Thompson was in his own words the "dedicated amorist" of beauty, but he was as often the slave as the lord of the mistress whom he loved. In the opening lines of 'The Hound of Heaven' we have one of the greatest passages of poetry written in the last century; but Thompson soon ceases to be a master of the grand style and sinks beneath his own redundance. And not infrequently he lapses into deplorably halting metre. Yet he can write

simply, and it is a pity he did not more often put aside his mannerisms to write other poems like 'In No Strange Land,' 'Ex Ore Infantium' and 'Daisy.' Not even Wordsworth could write poetry more simple and true than Thompson in the last-named poem.

"She went her unremembering way,
She went, and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone
And partings yet to be.

"She left me marvelling why my soul
Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
The sweetness in the sad.

. . . . .

"Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in other's pain,
And perish in our own."

In Francis Thompson's coffin was laid with roses the tribute of George Meredith to a poet far removed in character and belief: "A true poet, one of a small band." And if ever men were born with a high vocation to poetry Francis Thompson was of their number. There have been many greater poets, poets more simply truthful to the chastity of their art, poets more tuneful, and poets who come home more powerfully to the heart and imagination, but none called to poetry, as to a sacred office not to be laid aside, in any greater wise than Thompson. Poetry was his revelation of life, and for him, as for Keats, poetry was an end in itself. Keats claimed that poetry should be rounded and complete, leaving no sense of dissatisfaction, and Francis Thompson sought to make of poetry an art for its own sake. Like Keats, but to an excess the earlier poet never dreamed of, he loads every rift with ore; or rather he weaves a web of stiff cloth of gold. And the fault of much of his poetry is the fault of his *Essay on Shelley* (1908). The *Essay* is not good criticism but a marvellous feat in ornate and mystical diction; and his poetry often collapses into a turgid splendour of metaphysical and Latin words. His most

ambitious poem, the poem most distinctive of his gorgeous and ornate diction, is the famous 'Hound of Heaven.' But after the magnificent opening the poet is unable to sustain his flight, and passages sink into little more than elaborate acrobatics in Latinised vocabulary. Thompson uses words, as the maker of tapestry uses his threads, to weave a beautiful pattern, as the executant fingers notes on the piano, making of poetry an art confined within the limits of the pictorial and melodious. And the fascination of language blinds him almost as much as it did the French symbolists who read words in colours. Yet, strangely enough, Thompson was distinguished among poets of his time by his moral and spiritual exaltation. The inspired fervour of the religious mystic illumines his thought, glows in his verse, sanctifies his genius. But it does not appear that Catholic dogma was an intellectual necessity to him. The mystical doctrines irradiating his poetry are a theory accepted, not a conviction gained with great price. The ardent faith of Crashaw reaches the unbelieving mind, for Crashaw won his reward of faith: Thompson, like Herbert, leaves us unmoved by the faith that is in him. His metaphysical theology is the canvas backing to his tapestry; its function performed it has no further purposes to serve.

CHAPTER III

THE PASSAGE OF THE CENTURIES

§ 1. Thomas Hardy—A. E. Housman—Herbert Trench—Stephen Phillips—Laurence Binyon—Maurice Hewlett—C. M. Doughty—W. W. Gibson—John Masefield—Lascelles Abercrombie. § 2. Laurence Housman—Richard Le Gallienne—A. C. Benson—H. C. Beeching—Norman Gale—Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch—Sir Henry Newbolt. § 3. H. D. Lowry—Alfred Noyes—T. Sturge Moore—Hilaire Belloc—G. K. Chesterton—Alfred Williams—W. H. Davies—John Drinkwater—Walter de la Mare—Rupert Brooke—James Elroy Flecker.

§ 1

Between forty and fifty years ago Mr. Thomas Hardy published his first novel, and it is now fully twenty years since the appearance of his last piece of long work in fiction. As a novelist he belongs to an earlier chapter of literary history than any which falls naturally within the survey of this book. But as a poet he cannot be neglected in the present chapter where we are concerned with writers still living and many of them young; for his novels, among the greatest in English, are already classics in the backward of time, but in poetry he is a post-Victorian and owes nothing to the tradition of Browning, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold or Swinburne. And his poetry, like his fiction, has that large note of universality, that boldness of imaginative conception, which sets it apart from the work of any living poet, despite Mr. Hardy's limitations in the graces of the poetic art. It is, therefore, natural to deal with his work as a poet first and singly when we come to speak of poetry in the immediate present. The poetry treated in the last chapter belongs to or is contemporaneous with what has been called the renaissance of the 'nineties, but here we are occupied with a poetry still in evolution.

When Lionel Johnson wrote his admirable critique,

Thomas Hardy, b. 1840.–1928

The Art of Thomas Hardy (1894), he made no mention of Mr. Hardy as a writer of verse, treating him wholly as a novelist and craftsman in prose. It was not till four years later that Mr. Hardy relinquished prose and came forward as a poet with his not insubstantial volume of *Wessex Poems* (1898). Curiously enough, only four of the poems contained in this volume had already appeared in print. Critics whose sovereign virtue is a suspicion of novelty have plunged into consistent disparagement of Mr. Hardy's poetic faculty, and have never ceased openly to regret that a master of prose fiction has erred and gone astray. But he held on his way, publishing *Poems of the Past and the Present* in 1901, another miscellaneous collection of short poems, *Time's Laughing-stocks*, in 1909, and between these two came *The Dynasts* in three volumes (1904–1908). In these volumes Mr. Hardy has at least justified himself by conquering a natural prejudice against the choice of a new form of expression, and winning recognition, which no limitations can obscure, for the great qualities of his poetry.

In conception, in comprehensiveness, in the wide issues of its subject, and even in mere length, *The Dynasts* might have taxed the imagination and intellectual strength of a great poet in the prime of his powers, yet it is the work of a man over sixty years old, who has given the best of his time to prose. In this poem, perhaps more than in his novels, Mr. Hardy has exhibited that extraordinary sense of proportion and relative value which enables him to build every detail of a vast and varied scheme into an artistic and composite whole. The architectural faculty, upon which every critic of Mr. Hardy insists, shows no sign of failure, nor is there loss of insight in the great poetical drama. *The Dynasts*, when completed, was hailed as one of the most important and significant things in modern literature, as a "new species of writing," as the indubitable achievement of a far-reaching concept; and nothing was more remarkable than the complete detachment of the author from the poetic methods of his time. It stood by itself in form, method and spirit. "For a like achievement," wrote a critic in *The Times*, "we can only go back to one thing—the historical plays of Shakespeare,

where great and small are, as here, seen with a single eye, and where, as here, the common life of common humanity is made a part of the progress of history." And it is, perhaps, not the least interesting fact relative to the poem, when we consider its subject and complex form, that it has been widely read by the average frequenter of the lending library.

In *The Dynasts* Mr. Hardy has chosen to write a poem more ambitious in scope and design than any attempted by a poet since *Faust* lay for nearly sixty years in the hands of Goethe. The nearest approach to the same range of imagination in any English poem of modern times is to be found in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and incomparably greater in splendour of poetry as is Shelley's visionary drama it reads but as an unrelated incident compared with the whole experience of the human race when placed in contrast with Mr. Hardy's great work. In *The Dynasts* he has dramatised for the eye of the imagination, not for the stage, the chronicle of the Napoleonic wars, especially as they are related to English affairs, in three parts, nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes. *Peer Gynt* or the second part of *Faust* may be adapted to the stage without destroying all that lies enfolded within their poetry or hidden in those far-withdrawn regions whither the mind alone can travel; but in *The Dynasts* the appeal is directly to the intellect working through the imagination. No devices of the stage could compass its intention; nor will a love of pure poetry, *quasi* poetry, commend it to the reader. Mr. Hardy's aim has been to set forth the Napoleonic epoch as an instantaneous imaginative vision of Europe and to impress upon the reader its philosophical significance, if that word may be used of a poem which disclaims any hope of lifting "the burthen of the mystery." No mover of scenes, save the swift working of the mind, is competent to the changes of Mr. Hardy's drama. At the close of a scene we may be asked to understand that the Marchioness of Salisbury's reception-room in London "is shut over by the night without, and the point of view rapidly recedes south, London, and its streets and lights, diminishing till they are lost in the distance, and its noises being succeeded by the babble of the Channel waves" (II. ii. 3).

And beyond the human figures of the great scene are supernatural spectators whose chief end is to illustrate Mr. Hardy's deterministic concepts. *The Dynasts* is, in the words of Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie, "the biggest, the most consistent and deliberate exhibition of fatalism in literature." The Pities gaze sadly and in sympathy upon the spectacle of man's helplessness, the Ironic Spirits gleefully note the wanton malice of events, but neither can influence the ancient Spirit of the Years who has looked upon it all from time unending and knows that the incessant troubling of man is no more than one manifestation of the All-urging Will in a progress that has no meaning, good or bad, to evoke either pity or ironic laughter, for

> "like a knitter drowsed,
> Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
> The Will has woven with an absent heed
> Since first life was; and ever will so weave."

Mr. Hardy's philosophical concept of life is not here in question; but, however little its value, it cannot be denied that its very simplicity and consistency lend a grandeur to *The Dynasts* which it would not otherwise possess. To a later world it may seem as strange as the theologies of Dante and Milton are to the modern mind; yet as certainly as these earlier poems would never have grown to their largeness and beauty apart from that concept of the universe which either poet held, so surely Mr. Hardy's impressive drama would have remained unborn save for the unchanging and comprehensive determinism of his outlook upon life. And, if we refrain from judging it purely as a poem, *The Dynasts*, in the grand simplicity of its imaginative scene, wherein the land, cities, peoples and armies of Europe are revealed as in a single spectacle, moving, breathing, writhing in meaningless and self-immolating tragedy, is the most impressive achievement in English literature for two or three generations. But in the nobler kind of poetry it fails, save in brief passages or groups of lines, such as those quoted above; and to meet with these the reader must endure for many pages rough and unpleasing blank verse unredeemed by any potency or magic of expression and marred by crudities

that no pains were needed to avoid. In contrast the prose passages are simple and vigorous. Only incidentally can *The Dynasts* please in its parts: its greatness lies in the architectural grandeur of the all-embracing conception of which it is built.

Though not so generally recognised, Mr. Hardy's achievement with the short poem has been no less significant; and his last volume shows not only an advance in treatment and handling, but an absolute gain in poetic content. The bare fact that a writer who turns to poetry late in life should extend his reach, the intensity of his expression and the poetic quality of his thought, is as curious as it is remarkable. And though few of us will share the feeling, it is now possible to find people, whose instinct upon such a point is not contemptible, who will express a preference for the poet above the novelist.

The statement which has just been made, that Mr. Hardy turned seriously to verse late in life calls for some qualification. At least thirty poems, and probably more, in the three miscellaneous collections were written before any of the novels appeared. Every active mind, when it makes its first uncertain ventures in original expression, begins with verse. Mr. Hardy is no exception to the rule. Though the rough sonnets of the early period evidence much more than persevering industry, he fortunately realised that he was sent, to put it in his own formula, "into the world . . . by the all-immanent Will," as a writer of prose; and when all has been said, when the volumes of verse, including *The Dynasts*, have been weighed against the novels, he is greater as a prose-writer than as a poet. When the balance of value and permanent worth in imaginative prose writing during the nineteenth century is adjusted a hundred years hence, there can be little risk in the prophecy that the five greatest of Mr. Hardy's Wessex tales will, for qualities of sincerity, intensity and craftsmanship retain their place with the best that has yet been done in English. The novelist has overshadowed the poet; but the glib ease with which in some quarters the poet has been deplored as an intruder can find no justification in the volumes of poetry.

To turn over Mr. Hardy's three volumes of miscellaneous

verse is to be impressed, at the outset, with the range and variety of content, with the " bigness " of the world in which his thought and imagination move. We carry away from the poems that conscious awe of life's wonder and tragedy which the novels convey, the knowledge that in the fields and lanes of Wessex the drama of individual existence is as intense and inscrutable as in the larger whole which it reflects. We have sonnets, dramatic monologues, psychological studies, speculative poems, poems of pilgrimage, poems of war, dialect poems, love lyrics, songs, ballads, humorous poems and epigrams ; and it can be said without exaggeration that in hardly more than half a dozen instances is there no implication of the latent mystery which is behind the mood and incident of the moment. Little masters of song can write lyrics touched with a passion or subtle emotion which seize upon us for the moment, but only for the moment ; they are hardly more than the voice of a transient mood. The emotion of Mr. Hardy's poetry is that of a strong personality, too deep to break out into the feeling which has no essential relation to the whole attitude of his mind and thought toward the problems of life and nature. There is curiously little change in character between the early and the later poems. Mr. Hardy moves with greater ease in the trammels of verse now than when a young man ; but his melancholy, his deep sense of pity, his haunting consciousness of the irony of time which makes men's love and hatred and envy to perish—these are the same, and reflect themselves in the earliest as in the latest poems. He is convinced that " a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. . . . Yea, farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it " ; and his ' Young Man's Epigram on Existence,' written in 1866, echoes the thought of the Preacher—

> " A senseless school, where we must give
> Our lives that we may learn to live !
> A dolt is he who memorizes
> Lessons that leave no time for prizes."

Many of the early poems, which have been reprinted, are sonnets, a little awkward in form, uncertain in move-

ment, and wanting in the sweeping lift of thought and music which belongs to the great sonnet, yet admirably effective in unity and singleness of conception. The sonnets bring before us Mr. Hardy's fondness not only for the poem of disillusion in love, which we might expect from him, but a theme underlying many of his poems, which was also a stock subject with Tennyson—the *mésalliance*. His treatment of one of the world's oldest stories is more varied than Tennyson's, and it is also more intellectual. He cares less for details; the gentlemanly resignation or scolding regrets of Tennyson's Middle-Victorian people may be there, as perhaps they always are, but for Mr. Hardy they are not the essence of the matter, and he passes them over to show, often in personal monologue, the workings of the mind analysing the feelings of the heart and speculating on "life's little ironies." He displays here, as in his novels, that combination of tolerant pity and intellectual curiosity which marks his attitude toward the greatest of all tragic problems—the reason of sentient existence. Mr. Hardy's lovers never wholly lose themselves in the passionate joy or sorrow of the moment; they can always remember that their own story is part of the larger tragedy of life, they struggle unsuccessfully with the temptation to believe that "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made wiser," there is always a note of aloofness in their mental attitude. In Mr. Hardy's poems of love and regret there is a Shakespearean breadth of conception and thought. No other writer has made us feel so clearly and forcibly the unity of all life, the presence of earth's natural forces in the drama of conscious existence, and the continuity of man in his generations. Individual characters, personal details, and the circumstances of a story confined to a small county, are brought into unity with the whole drama of life, its inscrutable yet insistent problems, the mysteries of its joy and pain. The value of the dramatic monologue for purposes of reflection and speculative thought in poetry was raised to its highest power by Shakespeare in the plays and the great sonnet series; it was with this form that the two great poets of the latter half of the last century reached their finest achievements; and Mr. Hardy reflects a contemporary tendency,

if in nothing else, in his adoption of this method of expression in verse.

In the three volumes of short poems the dramatic monologue is not only a favourite form with Mr. Hardy, but much of his best work is cast in this mould. That the monologue should become an important instrument of poetry in an introspective age is not surprising, for, while it affords opportunity for the spontaneity of lyrical emotion, it embodies the more purely intellectual qualities of elegiac poetry. In the dramatic monologue the poet can find not only a natural means of uttering the inexplicable things of the heart, whence are "the issues of life," but emotion may be combined with intellectual speculation, and the two may pass and repass, merge or flow in separate channels. In the eighteenth century the impersonal attitude of the *Essay on Man* was the natural form of the reflective poem; but the insistent personal note of the nineteenth century demanded the monologue. In one or another form of the dramatic monologue the most memorable of Mr. Hardy's shorter poems are to be found—'Her Death and After,' 'A Sign Seeker,' 'The Two Rosalinds,' 'A Tramp-woman's Tragedy,' 'A Sunday Morning Tragedy,' 'In the Crypted Way.'

The four last-named poems belong to Mr. Hardy's most recent volume, which certainly holds his finest work in pure poetry. In this collection there is no loss of content in thought, no weakening of the imaginative powers, and, in point of poetic diction, in the moulding of metre and the use of words, several of these pieces are beyond anything in the earlier volumes. It is rare to find a poet who can learn and make use of experience when well past middle age. The exception to a rule which Mr. Hardy affords is attributable doubtless to the curious impartiality with which he combines originality of genius and temperament with a readily receptive mind. The poems are an object lesson to point the statement that originality of the highest order and a plastic receptivity play concurrent parts in the production of Mr. Hardy's work.

Of the poems in monologue, which have been named, the most striking and impressive, as well as the most characteristically Wessex, is 'A Tramp-woman's Tragedy'; but

it is overlong for quotation *in extenso*, and it is difficult to give less than the whole. 'In the Crypted Way' is short, inevitably reminiscent of Browning, yet original; and in all that it reveals and suggests without definite "lining-in," is, in the region of poetry, surpassed by few pieces anywhere.

"In the crypted way, where the passage turned
To the shadowy corner that one could see,
You pause to part from me—plaintively;
Though overnight had come words that burned
My fond frail happiness out of me.

"And then I kissed you—despite my thought
That our spell must end when reflection came
On what you had deemed me, whose one long aim
Had been to serve you; that what I sought
Lay not in a heart that could breathe such blame.

"But yet I kissed you: whereon you again
As of old kissed me. Why, why was it so?
Do you cleave to me after that light-tongued blow?
If you scorned me at eventide, how love then?
The thing is dark, Dear. I do not know."

Mr. Hardy's advance in the use of metre and poetic form has been alluded to already; but nobody will study him as a metrist of charm. His ear is not sensitive to the subtle harmonies of vocalic and consonantal music; and for the most part music of line and felicity of inevitable words are not ends for which he labours. For many pages he seems scarcely to use a word, idiom or phrase, which do not belong to prose, yet we rarely drop into a suspicion that we are reading prose edged with rhyme. The style is too individualistic, and the thought of even the baldest of the poems could scarcely be put so well in prose. In the writing of a poet like Mr. Hardy, whose great qualities lie elsewhere, the occasional flatness and the faults of his versification are, perhaps, points unworthy of attention. He becomes uncertain and rough when he combines anapæsts with disyllabic feet; and in easier metre he is in danger of tiring the ear with hammered accents. In 'The Darkling Thrush,' for example, a short poem of thirty-two lines in common measure, there is only one trisyllabic foot to relieve the unbroken beat of the

lines. It might almost seem that Dr. Johnson's famous example of the metre was followed with judicious care. Many of the earlier poems sing-song distressingly, or impinge on the ear heavily without variety or relief. The last volume evidences greater skill in the use of words, in the moulding of line and stanza, and a few poems could hardly be bettered in form. But a metrist Mr. Hardy is not; and few can so well afford as he to dispense with the graces of verse making.

The note of melancholy, the doubt of any ultimate ethical and spiritual good which pervade the prose and verse of Mr. Hardy has, it has been well said, far from a depressing, an almost bracing effect. The attitude of his mind has never varied; it is as clear in the early poems as it is in the late; though we may discern in the last volume the quieter tone of old age, which no longer strives against the bars of the world. In great pessimists, different as they are, such as the Preacher, Schopenhauer, Carlyle, Mr. Hardy, we are not listening to petulant outbursts of Byronic disillusion. The thought goes deeper: it is a reasoned belief, the frank confession of logical inability to see the world as others see it, to accept it upon too easy terms. This is Mr. Hardy's attitude; he does not doubt the sincerity of optimism; but he is as sincerely incapable himself of discovering its justification. The poet finds himself at a cathedral service, and acknowledges—

> "That from this bright believing band
> An outcast I should be,
> That faiths by which my comrades stand
> Seem fantasies to me,
> And mirage-mists their Shining Land,
> Is a drear destiny."

Yet he bids those who think differently to himself to remember that the "bird deprived of wings" does not "go earth-bound wilfully," but because it must. And herein lies the root of the whole matter.

As we should expect from a student of personality and temperament of Mr. Hardy's power and insight, those poems which may be described as psychological studies of character are of great interest. A large proportion of the whole number of his shorter poems might be brought

into the class without difficulty, for intellectual introspectiveness is the bent of Mr. Hardy's mind; but a certain smaller number falls more directly within this category. And here again, in 'The Slow Nature,' 'The Two Men,' 'Middle-age Enthusiasms,' 'In a Looking-glass,' 'The King's Experiment,' 'The Conformers,' the whirligig of time, the irony of fate, is the single thought which pervades the poems. The unchanging form of Time is personified; it broods over the life of man; without haste and without remorse it works its unconscious will upon him. We are reminded of the like sentient endowment which Mr. Hardy gives to the unseen forces of earth, sky and air in the novels. The irony of man's littleness, the vacillation of his character with the passing years, the limitations of his heart and intellect in the face of all-embracing time are reiterated. The young man knows that the glow of romance will die down into the "frigid tone of household speech," that those who come after, forgetting the love romance, will

> ". . . as they graveward glance,
> Remark: 'In them we lose
> A worthy pair, who helped advance
> Sound parish views!'"

On the other hand, the poet finds 'In a Looking-glass' the pathos, not less great, of those who grow old, while the impulses of the heart are still fresh and warm. The mystery of time weighs upon his thought and imagination. This is true of him not only in his later years; for 'The Two Men' (1866), one of his earliest poems, is imbued with the same profound sense of the insufficiency of human endeavour and ambition, the same consciousness that "there is one event unto all." The 'War Poems,' 'Poems of Pilgimage,' and some of the narrative poems escape this obsession; but if we turn to that part of the last volume which falls under the title of 'Love Lyrics,' expecting to find songs "all breathing human passion," we shall either be disappointed, or interested to read lyrics of love, or more often its loss, tinged with at least as much intellectualism as passion. This is not to say that passion is wholly absent; but the lover as often turns to dissect the nature of his regrets and hopes as

to utter his feelings without reflection. Among Mr. Hardy's shorter pieces, however, not a few of the most truly poetical, both in form and content, belong to this section.

It is curious that so few poems of the novelist of Wessex should be in dialect; for Mr. Hardy makes no attempt to work the same ground as Barnes's *Poems in the Dorset Dialect*. Poems containing dialect there are—'Friends Beyond,' 'The Curate's Kindness,' 'The Homecoming' and 'The Fire at Tranter Sweatley's,' which was first printed in bowdlerised form in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, over forty years ago. The best version of this spirited piece is that in *Wessex Poems*, where the author has supplied more dialect than in that printed by Mr. Lane in the appendix to *The Art of Thomas Hardy*. But in the matter of dialect and the use of local idiom Mr. Hardy has gone his own way; and his poetry almost entirely eschews these things.

An insistence upon the more obvious characteristics of Mr. Hardy's work as a poet tends to obscure aspects and issues which are hardly less significant and interesting. Mr. Hardy is not primarily a poet, but a prose-writer whose great achievement it has been to raise the standard of plot construction in the writing of the English novel, while he is first and foremost an artist endowed with a profoundly original vision of human life. The strength of the poems, as of the prose, is the backing of an original and self-centred personality. Mr. Hardy's insight may sometimes be obscured by limitations of temperament; he may ring the changes of thought and situation upon a narrow cycle; yet even in his repetitions he never trifles with his subject or works by rote. He is never without content; and even in the slightest poem of two stanzas we are conscious that we are never far from the confines of the larger issues of life. There is a reality wider than the poem; almost every poem makes us feel that the thought is greater than the expression—and of how little poetry or prose can this much be said? Even in the few pieces of lyric song there is a breadth and simplicity of thought and emotion which carry us away to days of less strain, artifice and nervous complexity than our own.

A study of Mr. Hardy's poetry almost inevitably brings to mind Mr. A. E. Housman, a poet of like temper, whose verse centres in the life and people of one county. Mr. Housman has contented himself with the publication of a single volume of verse, *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), and the unease he shows, the wistful melancholy informing nearly all his poems, suggest that they were written when he was a young man and had not yet reached the stage of indifferent resignation many sink into at the fourth decade of life. Yet Mr. Housman's reflective melancholy, his faithlessness in the immortalities, has no sentimentality or morbid pettiness. His melancholy has been compared to that of Mr. Hardy, and like Mr. Hardy's discovery of life's unmeaning, Mr. Housman's philosophy of disbelief is strong and bracing. His attitude is simply summarised in a poem of mingled humour and earnest—

A. E. Housman, b. 1859.

> "Therefore, since the world has still
> Much good, but much less good than ill
> And while the sun and moon endure
> Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,
> I'd face it as a wise man would,
> And train for ill and not for good."

In Mr. Housman's world the gods kill us for their sport and life is an irony; as often as not the reward is given to him who did not toil, and the bride lies by another while the green grass and clover grow above her lover. Mr. Housman, like Mr. Hardy, has a stoic faith in the courage to endure, but he takes no pride in hiding his sympathy for the suffering of simple and obscure people who sink beneath their fate. Nearly all his poetry is of the dales and woodlands of Shropshire, of the life of the people on the soil and in the market town, but it is not a pastoral poetry. His diction is entirely simple, he writes of the primitive and changeless in life, but his simplicity is that of the cultivated and thoughtful mind holding itself aloof. He uses ballad measure, but his thought is elegiac; no impassioned emotion sways him to the loss of his soul. Though he writes of earth and the life of the soil, and his vocabulary is admirably simple, his poetry reveals in every line the reflective melancholy

of the scholar and recluse. Few volumes of poetry published within the last quarter of a century possess qualities which make for enduring life as Mr. Housman's single book of verse. His vision of life is intensely poetical, he never writes a poem that is empty of thought, image or idea, for he must have something whereof to sing; and in nuance, in subtle and exquisite cadences of music and rhythm only one living poet has a more beautiful faculty than he—Mr. Bridges. And whereas few poems of Mr. Bridges have a content that satisfies, Mr. Housman rarely fails to utter some thought. Mr. Bridges' is largely an art of verse; poetry demands more than melody—the lesser art of the musician. *A Shropshire Lad* holds a collection of poems of almost entire perfection, like stones cut to many facets and beautifully reflecting the light in many aspects, whether we regard them merely as verse exercises, strong and simple reflection on life, or poetry of elegiac emotion. The level is wonderfully even, and it is hard to discriminate between these poems, but in one, 'Be still, my soul, be still,' Mr. Housman rises above his ordinary manner to a large and spacious utterance which sets the poem apart.

After the mention of Mr. Thomas Hardy the problem of differentiation between the more important writers of verse in our day becomes increasingly difficult, relations and distinctions can hardly be discovered or stated in set words; and, in general, we must content ourselves with the study of the individual poet, avoiding the temptation to find impossible and fanciful links of connection with others. In the middle of the last century the wide and prevailing influences in poetry were simple and clearly marked; the impulses of the period spent themselves, and in the last twenty-five years, although certain tendencies already marked can be defined, the course of English poetry has largely resolved itself into individual and disconnected aims. And therefore in continuing this section of the present chapter it will only be possible to bring together poets of larger endowment and higher distinction than their contemporaries, and assign to another section poets of narrower range and lesser talent, noting, whenever they manifest themselves, common influences or ideals. It was natural to name *A Shropshire Lad* in

immediate conjunction with the poetry of Mr. Thomas Hardy, not only in view of a likeness in temper and mood between the poets of Wessex and Shropshire, but because the genius of Mr. A. E. Housman places him with the first of living English poets. His name is not widely known to the large army of desultory readers who take their knowledge of contemporary poetry from information provided by literary periodicals, nor is Mr. Herbert Trench one of the best known poets of the day. They flaunt no sensationalism or violences of language to prove their astonishing originality to the gaping crowd, as the custom has been in the last few years, but it may safely be prophesied that so far as beauty of melody, felicity of phrase, and high gifts of simple and sincere imagination can confer lasting fame, Mr. A. E. Housman and Mr. Herbert Trench need not fear an early oblivion.

Herbert Trench, b. 1865.

Mr. Herbert Trench's career opened brilliantly. He won distinctions at Oxford and a fellowship at All Souls' College. He has since been a civil servant, a manager of the Haymarket Theatre, and he has travelled widely in Europe and the Near East. His life has thus been full and active; but he is by birth a native of the world of mind. Art and the expression of life in art are for him the chief end in life. It is, therefore, surprising that his first volume of verse, *Deirdre Wedded* (1901), did not appear till he was in his thirty-sixth year. The title-poem of this volume chooses as a theme no established incident from the story of Deirdre, that magnificent subject handled by nearly all Irish poets and dramatists, but an episode invented by the poet. The story is told by three chanters chanting out of three different epochs in three metres. The voice of Fintan out of the first century speaks in blank verse, the voice of Cir out of "a century more remote, but unknown," speaks in a four-line stanza of ragged anapæsts, the voice of Urmael out of the sixth century speaks in a ten-line stanza of iambic pentameters. Fintan, who speaks twice, has the advantage of the first and last word. Variation of metre in a single poem may be used with singular appropriateness to changes in theme and matter—Tennyson's *Vision*

of Sin is an example that occurs to mind—but, as Mr. William Archer pointed out long since, there seems no differentiation between the sections of Mr. Trench's brief epic which warrants these curious experiments in metre and the adoption of a form tiresome in its artificiality. In a poem of direct narrative, tinged with the epic manner, Mr. Trench's scheme can only be regarded as an unfortunate device which detracts from the beauty of the work as a whole. It destroys all sense of unity; and a further fault is that Mr. Trench shows little consciousness of fit conjunction between theme and language. With all their affectations the poets of the Irish school have recognised that the stories of Deirdre and Oisin are so far removed from modern vision and thinking, that they can only be told in a special vocabulary differing from modern English as widely as the otherworldliness inherent in these stories of a dim past differs from the spirit of a practical and commercial age. Mr. Trench's metres and style have no psychical relation to his matter. The total impression of *Deirdre Wedded* is of a poem which largely fails for the want of restraint in diction and care in the moulding of metre. The blank verse exhibits extraordinary liberties in the use of trochees and anapæsts; the anapæstic lines lack measured swing; and the iambic pentameters are often curiosities.

> "For his heart, after thee rising away"

can by no ingenuity be scanned as an iambic line. And nobody would suspect as other than prose Mr. Trench's verse when written thus—

> "But when an upward space of grass—so free—so endless—
> beckoned to the realms of wind Deirdre broke from his side,
> and airily fled up the slopes, flinging disdains behind."

All Mr. Trench's verse in this poem has pace and vigour, we are carried swiftly on our way, but the technique is weak and faulty. His vocabulary is often tortured beyond a degree of tolerance. His passion for double epithets is extraordinary. Sometimes they are used with effect, and sometimes preposterously. The "wind-sleek turf" is a good image, and the "green-litten air" of the woods;

but the "ravage-whetted bulk" of the boar conveys no idea, and the "flake-soft" descent of Deirdre's hand suggests not snow but the scaling off a surface.

The blundering awkwardness of much of the poem is surprising when we reflect on its many beauties, its onrush, its gift of imaginative phrasing which arrest and hold us. In romantic and mystical landscape painting none of the Irish poets, hardly Shelly himself in *Prometheus Unbound* or *Alastor*, has surpassed these lines of Mr. Trench—

"So they measured the Plain of the Dreamers, the Brake of the Black Ram,
Till the Crag of the Dances before them did shape and loom.
And the Meads of the Faery Hurlers in silver swam
Then up to the Gap of the Winds, and the far-seen tomb
White on Slieve Fuad's side."

There is so much of beauty, true imagination and power of language, especially of epithet, in Mr. Trench's poem, that it is of far greater moment and importance than the complete successes of other poets in easier fields.

Mr. Trench is not a rapid writer. Not till six years after his first did his second volume, *New Poems* (1907), appear. It contained the finest of his poems, the long and allegorical, 'Apollo and the Seaman.' Apollo comes to earth and sits sharing a jug of wine with a sailor who tells him that—

"I heard them calling in the streets
That the ship I serve upon—
The great ship Immortality—
Was gone down, like the sun."

The poem proceeds in the form of a dialogue between Apollo and the seaman, leading up to the conclusion, announced by Apollo, that the true nature of immortality is racial, not individual, and that the world is permeated with God.

"Yet leaf shall of leaf become aware
On the self-same bough and stem,
Whose branches are murmuring everywhere;
And the heaven floods all of them."

The versification in passages is not without its roughnesses, but for the most part Mr. Trench uses his common

measure strongly, simply and melodiously. The temptation to quote passage after passage from this noble poem, remarkable for the direct simplicity of its allegory, the sincerity of its mystic interpretation of life, the beauty of its imagery and the music of its verse is hard to resist. In an age when cheap and sentimental mystic systems have become a vogue with drawing-rooms and literary coteries it is a relief to turn from artifice and facile ecstasies to reality. 'Apollo and the Seaman' is a poem of atmosphere and often reminds the reader of *The Ancient Mariner*, but not with the suggestion of derivation.

The same volume contains another allegorical poem of some length in 'The Queen of Gothland,' some noble 'Stanzas to Tolstoy,' a curiously poignant but metrically rough poem, 'The Questioners,' and a number of shorter lyrics, not one of which is negligible. In the wealth of its diction, in the mingled truth and beauty of its mystic apprehension of life, in its imaginative content Mr. Trench's *New Poems* is a volume that takes a place in the first order of poetry written within this century.

Lyrics and Narrative Poems (1911) is chiefly a rearrangement of older verse. Among the new poems the ode, 'On Romney Marsh at Sunrise' and 'Bitter Serenade,' are marked by that true emotion which distinguishes the best of Mr. Trench's lyrical poetry.

Mr. Trench is far from being a prolific writer; and in what he has written he has not always been careful, even if all allowance be made for his purposeful disregard at times of the mere graces of verse. In this it is plain that he has written with his eyes open. But he is better than himself, and the greater part of his poetry is not only imaginatively conceived but melodiously executed. In Mr. Trench we recognise the scholar imbued with a love of art and a passion for poetry, a scholar and a poet who never loses touch with life and those philosophical questionings which knock throughout the generations at the heart of man. In 'Apollo and the Seaman,' in the odes, and in the short lyrics he is the poet of an optimistic faith and philosophy. It is his belief that: "In alliance between the arts of Poetry and Music, and in the philosophic ideas they may together convey lies . . . much of promise for our civilisation." In the genius of Mr. Trench there

is a mingling, of adventurous romanticism, intuitive mysticism and reasoned philosophy comparable, *magno intervallo*, to the endowment of Coleridge. The mysticism of the Celt in his nature is balanced by an English level-headedness: his vision of the world is almost equally pictorial and abstract, for his abstract ideas readily take the form of poetic allegory.

Stephen Phillips, 1868–1915.

In choice of theme—classic legend or mediæval romance—in resemblances between their use of verse, rhymed or unrhymed, and in other parallelisms of manner the names of Stephen Phillips, Mr. Laurence Binyon and Mr. Maurice Hewlett present a natural conjunction, and among poets of the day they are noteworthy, although in the case of not one of the three is the measure of inspiration constant or abundant. The name of Stephen Phillips is associated in the popular mind with the revival of poetic drama on the English stage. His early experience as an actor was here of value to him, but the gifts he possessed were lyric rather than dramatic. Nevertheless, he was caught by the fascination of the theatre when a young man. At the end of his first term at Cambridge he left the University and joined the Shakespearean company of Mr. F. R. Benson, with whom he remained for six years. After abandoning the stage he was for a short time an army coach before definitely turning to literature. In 1890 he published with his cousin, Mr. Laurence Binyon, and others a booklet of verse, entitled *Primavera*. None of the poems of this brochure is of significance; but with *Eremus* (1894), a lengthy blank-verse poem, Phillips won the praise of critics like Symonds and Stopford Brooke. Despite its many metrical shortcomings and its shapeless construction *Eremus* gave evidence of poetic vision and the power to write fluent and rapidly moving blank verse. The narrative of this pessimistic allegory is almost ludicrous. Eremus is borne to the regions of Chaos to discover that the Creator makes worlds and planets for his sport and leaves them to drift to ruin. On his return to earth Eremus, with unpardonable tactlessness, reveals his discoveries in the supernatural world. The allegory, such as it is, shows no depth or intellectual force; the verse,

though disfigured by metrical violences, is not without beauty and vigour; and the dialogue, freely used, may be regarded as an early indication of dramatic bent in the young actor-poet's mind.

Christ in Hades (1896), a blank-verse narrative of Christ's descent to the nether world and his meeting with Virgil, Prometheus and other figures, is of no higher merit allegorically or imaginatively, but it had the distinction of bringing into the arena of the daily paper and the street placard a discussion upon the legitimate uses of trochees and inverted stresses in English blank verse. *Eremus* no less than *Christ in Hades* is rich in lines difficult of scansion on any principles yet known. In 1898 Mr. James Douglas appeared in the *Star* as the champion of Milton against Stephen Phillips. Phillips replied, and the battle was ranged upon either side between those who refused to be persuaded by his justification of his eccentricities and those who roundly declared "it would be as impossible for Mr. Phillips to write a halting line as, let us say, for Sarasate to play out of tune." The critic just quoted cites as an example of Phillips' music these lines from *Christ in Hades*—

> "The bright glory of after-battle wine,
> The flushed recounting faces, the stern hum
> Of burnished armies."

Lines more intolerable it would be difficult to conceive. They bristle with faults. The trochee in the second foot of the first line and the disregard of elision, the cæsura and collapse of stress in the fourth and virtual spondee in the fifth foot of the second line, all combine to produce an effect so cacophonous that we stand in amaze that Phillips, a careful student of metres, should succeed in passing it. To pursue his versification further would here be out of place. Enthusiastic defenders of his irregularities in the two early blank-verse poems may take it as matter for reflection that in his later blank verse, in 'Marpessa' and the plays, Phillips evidently took his chiding to heart, for in these a change to a more careful method of versification can hardly pass unnoticed. And with an advance in technical mastery he wrote a few

passages of melodious blank-verse hardly rivalled by any contemporary.

The *Poems* of 1897 gained the doubtful laurel wreath of the *Academy* one hundred guinea prize, and once more the name of Stephen Phillips was blazoned abroad to the millions of poetry lovers who read the evening papers. The volume contained beside *Christ in Hades*, already published, another long poem, 'Marpessa.' The cadences of the blank verse of 'Marpessa,' and the paragraph structure represent a striking advance upon Phillips' earlier work. In variation of stress and rhythm, in the harmonious and ready flow of the lines, in the form of his sentences he succeeded in using his verse in a manner scarcely rivalled since Tennyson's *Ulysses* and *Morte d'Arthur*. And in many single lines and phrases there come those swift analogies which are the essence of fine poetry. He often achieves surprising condensation of thought and imagery in two or three lines, as in—

> "thy life has been
> The history of a flower in the air,
> Liable but to breezes and to time,
> As rich and purposeless as is the rose."

And he does not often sink to the level of images so falsely conceived and absurdly expressed as—"lilies musical with busy bliss." The poem tells how Marpessa having been given her choice between Apollo, the immortal, and Idas, a mortal, chose Idas. And the noblest passage of human poetry Phillips has written is that in which Marpessa gives reason for her choice.

> "But if I live with Idas, then we two
> On the low earth shall prosper hand in hand
> In odours of the open field, and live
> In peaceful noises of the farm, and watch
> The pastoral fields burned by the setting sun.
> And he shall give me passionate children, not
> Some radiant god that will despise me quite,
> But clambering limbs and little hearts that err.
> And I shall sleep beside him in the night,
> And fearful from some dream shall touch his hand
> Secure; or at some festival we two
> Will wander through the lighted city streets;
> And in the crowd I'll take his arm and feel
> Him closer for the press. So shall we live."

In strength, tenderness and purity nothing fails in this passage. The beauty of its music is only marred by the intrusion of two trochees where they ought not to be, and the grave simplicity of the style by the use of one conventional phrase—" pastoral fields."

' Marpessa ' is by far the finest poem of the volume. The realism of ' The Woman with the Dead Soul ' misses effect in diffuseness. ' The Wife ' is sordid without point or moral. Nor are the short lyrics of outstanding beauty ; but the brief blank verse ' To Milton—Blind ' is a fine and simple poem of address.

Several of the early poems—' Marpessa,' ' Christ in Hades '—showed a tendency to the use of dialogue, but there was no special evidence of dramatic faculty till, at the request of Sir George Alexander, Phillips wrote *Paolo and Francesca* (1899), the first of the blank-verse plays which gave to the author the distinction of reviving poetic drama on the stage with some measure of success. As dramatic poets Tennyson and Browning notably failed, despite the genuine dramatic power of ' A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.' James Sheridan Knowles had stagecraft, but he was utterly deficient in imagination and poetry. Swinburne's plays were hardly written for the stage, and the same statement holds true of the work of that poet of genius, Beddoes. The poetic drama of the nineteenth century is a drama of the study ; whatever its intention its end is poetry, not drama. The age of Elizabeth was an age of action, of outward pomp and show, of extravagance in dress, of magnificent affectations in deportment and conduct, reflected in the writers of the period in an almost universally diffused power of dramatic composition. The age of Victoria, an age of science, of intellectual and ethical megrims, fostered lyric and elegiac poetry. Into one or other of these classes nearly all the poetry of the century falls. Nor did Phillips escape this limitation as a dramatist. The poetry of great drama must be objective, for it is the projection of the author's imagination into the minds of differing characters : lyric poetry is subjective, and therefore incongruous with true drama. Stephen Phillips, from experience, had a knowledge of the actor on the boards and his needs ; he was painfully eager to allow no

pause in action, lest the vitality of his drama should suffer; he was fully conscious of the value of adventitious aids, such as the sound of trumpets, the murmuring of crowds, the use of asides, swift alternations between the intense and the lighter treatment of life. But these *are* adventitious aids and have neither part nor lot in the essence of great drama. And Phillips came short of great poetic drama, because, among other reasons, the poetry of his dialogue is not flexible to the sway of mood in differing characters. Or, put summarily, his poetry is a garment of dialogue, it is not the inevitable utterance of the soul in its transcendent moments: it lends beauty to his plays, it gives them no additional dramatic power. His poetry is a decoration and serves little purpose in the interpretation of personality. For, though he possessed a genuine dramatic gift, his poetry was lyrical; but it was his good fortune as a poet for the stage to express himself better in blank verse than in any other metre. Yet the series of his poetic dramas was hailed at first with triumphant panegyrics. Professor Churton Collins declared that *Paolo and Francesca* gave Phillips kinship "with Sophocles and Dante." To-day this unbalanced outburst only excites a smile, and we are puzzled to conceive how anybody could be led to attribute to a beautiful but slight lyric the grandeur of Sophocles or Dante. The tragedy of man in all his generations is mirrored in the older poets: in Phillips' poem we are never tempted to look beyond the pathos of Paolo and Francesca's love-story. Nevertheless, following Mr. Archer, it may be said of Phillips' first drama, that he has taken a story shrined in beauty by Dante and has rendered it again without derogating from its beauty. *Paolo and Francesca* is not undramatic, but it is something better—one of the most beautiful long poems written in the last century, within which it just succeeds in falling. The stories of Paolo and Francesca and of Tristram and Iseult are the two most beautiful of the world's stories of transgression, because they tell not of indulgence, but of love that is lord of the earth. Phillips' poem is beautiful as a whole, and it is also full of that magic of poetry in single and pictorial phrases which he lost later, which, indeed, he never reached

again in nearly equal measure, save in *Ulysses*. The description, for example, of the stillness before dawn is exquisitely and magically beautiful.

> "So still it is that we might almost hear
> The sigh of all the sleepers in the world,
> And all the rivers running to the sea."

The characters of the drama are living, they are far from being mere puppets, but they are subsumed to the general lyrical atmosphere of the play rather than strongly delineated. Paolo and Francesca are romantic embodiments of youth and pure passion, Giovanni Malatesta is a brooding and sinister pattern of the dramatic type to which he belongs, and Lucrezia, the best drawn character of the play, is the middle-aged woman of the world in whom the sympathies of motherly tenderness are awakened by the helplessness and innocent purity of Francesca. The *dramatis personæ* are well-known types, seen before and recognised again, but *Paolo and Francesca* contains no strong, original or creative character-drawing.

The brilliant, hard and spectacular character of his theme in *Herod* (1900), the second of his dramas, gave Phillips less opportunity as a poet, and we are conscious that he does his best in spite of rather than for the sake of his subject. The background of political affairs also hampers him ; for politics do not enter readily into drama. And, further, Phillips made the mistake of rendering in blank verse the quick give-and-take of half-sentences and exclamatory phrases—an impossibility. In *Paolo and Francesca* and *Ulysses* he wisely used prose in many scenes, and *Herod* would be the better for a liberal use of prose dialogue. Blank verse cannot be snipped asunder successfully : it is the function of drama in verse to utter the thoughts of the heart, not to render back the common colloquialisms of everyday speech. And the poetry of the longer speeches in *Herod* comes short of Phillips' best powers, although detached lines and thoughts of great beauty are not wholly wanting. The impassioned outbursts of Herod in the second act occasionally almost reach the extravagant metaphorical splendour of Elizabethan drama.

"I arise,
And spill the wine of glory on the ground:
I turn my face into the night."

On its first performance these lines and passages of a like nature suggested to enthusiasts a comparison between *Herod* and the dramatic poetry of Webster.

Ulysses (1902), even more emphatically than *Herod*, is poetry wedded to spectacular scenes, not drama: it is to be read rather than performed, and in its ideal and mythical setting it loses itself in undramatic lyricism. In *Ulysses* Phillips regained, however, the poetic inspiration which had, in part, been checked by *Herod*.

At this stage Phillips was still to be considered as the lyric poet, possessed of some stagecraft, who sought to restore poetic drama to the theatre. In the dramas which followed he threw in his lot with the makers of problem plays, and his poetry suffered because the author's attention was divided. Yet the first two acts of *The Sin of David* (1904), first produced in 1914, are dramatically most successful; the verse, though not arresting, is admirably suited to its purpose, and the author does not stray into lyric irrelevance. The characters of Colonel Mardyke, the stern Puritan, Miriam, his beautiful wife, and Sir Hubert Lisle, who sins with her the sin of David, are drawn in firm and convincing outline. But the third act, placed four years later, collapses dramatically; and the pseudo-happy ending over the body of the dead child of Lisle and Miriam is a fault in taste and ethic only saved from repulsiveness by its melodramatic sentimentality. *Nero* (1906) is likewise a problem play—a sketch of stages in Nero's mental degeneration rather than a drama. It is longer and more diffuse than the earlier plays, and in poetry a retrogression. The craftsmanship of the verse is good, but there is hardly a trace of those felicities of phrase and thought which marked 'Marpessa,' *Paolo and Francesca*, *Ulysses* and *The Sin of David*. On the other hand the play does give evidence of a genuine gift of psychological insight. Without unnecessary elaboration or labour Phillips shows Nero not as the monster of purposeful cruelty, but the man with giant powers of self-deception, who, in the worst of his moods,

the destruction of his mother, his attempts to seduce Poppæa, his burning of Rome, regards himself as one who cannot sin, the least malicious, most gentle and highly-gifted of men.

Pietro of Siena (1910) is, like *The Sin of David*, founded upon one of the world's well-worn problem tales—in this case the bribe of a brother's life for the sacrifice of chastity. The temptation is resisted, the riotous libertine, like the lover of Pamela, offers marriage, all are reconciled and we end to the music of marriage bells. The treatment is too conventional for the subject. The construction of the play is good ; but the theme is sifted through the imagination like fine sand and leaves nothing behind. The ethical standpoint, as vulgar as Richardson's, would surprise us in Stephen Phillips had we not already met with his lapse in *The Sin of David*. And in poetry we are conscious that he strives, without success, to reach the standard of his earlier days. Only once in the play do we meet with lines possessing the magic of his best manner.

> "A voice that stole on us
> Like strings from planets dreaming in faint skies,
> With a low pleaded music."

This was the last of Phillips' poetic dramas cast in the Elizabethan mould. In *The King* (1912) he essayed a drama, constructed after the Greek model in a series of continuous scenes, based upon the story of Don Carlos. The play is comparatively short, and whereas the scheme does not serve to differentiate the play in any essential way from the earlier dramas, the poetry illustrates the author's exhaustion. The only passage of beautiful and impassioned writing is the renunciatory speech of Christina in the second scene. Of this speech the author need not have been ashamed at the height of his powers. But it does little more than accentuate by contrast the poverty of the rest of the play.

It is less than twenty years since *Paolo and Francesca* was hailed with extravagant praise as the dawn of a new era ; and of Stephen Phillips it was hoped that he would bring again to the theatre the dayspring of poetry banishing the long night of prose. A few years have passed, his

plays have been played, and the night, to all appearances, has settled upon them, for managers show no anxiety to risk a revival. Stephen Phillips succeeded no better than Tennyson, whose plays are not contemptible dramatically, and yet we hardly trouble to weigh them in any estimate of his genius. Ibsen's powers as poet or dramatist are set far above the plane of Stephen Phillips, but *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* can only be read, and Ibsen's social dramas are written in a bald prose which avoids the faintest tincture of poetry. The writing of poetry that justifies itself dramatically in its power of revealing character is of all the gifts of genius the most rarè. It manifested itself first in Greek tragedians at Athens in her great day, again with varying power in English dramatists of Elizabeth's reign, a little later in Corneille, Racine and Molière, in the next century in Schiller and slightly in Goethe. In ages and countries widely separated true poetic drama has flourished, and we are not yet justified in asking with despair whether the world has not grown too old and sophisticated for a living and breathing poetry of the theatre. If it is not now yet it will be. But it was not given to Stephen Phillips to restore poetic drama in England, for his poetry was intrinsically lyric, adorning his dialogue, not vivifying his characters. Nor is there any clear originality, belonging to himself and his age, distinguishing his poetical and dramatic methods. The influences shaping his drama are three, Elizabethan, Greek and classical French. Greek influence is most clearly exhibited in *The King*, and elsewhere in the rigid economy of his method, the influence of French classic drama in the stately stiffness of many of his passages, and Elizabethan influence in the cultivation of paradoxical metaphors like that contained in the lines often praised—

> "The red-rose cataract of her streaming hair
> Is tumbled o'er the boundaries of the world."

Like others who attempted to write poetic drama in the nineteenth century Phillips was derivative, and his success was no greater than theirs.

Phillips' later non-dramatic verse is contained in *New Poems* (1908), *The New Inferno* (1911) and *Lyrics*

and Dramas (1913). In the first volume are gathered together poems belonging to several years and collected from various quarters. The blank verse ' Endymion ' is not in his best manner, but ' Grief and God,' written in heroic couplets, after a bad beginning with two detestably ugly lines continues as a beautiful poem. The short lyrics of this volume are more likely to linger in the memory than the longer poems. In verbal magic and music two poems of regret, ' A Girl's Last Words ' and ' To a Lost Love ' are among the most beautiful Phillips ever wrote, although the latter is too obviously copied from Rossetti's ' Blessed Damozel.' *The New Inferno* is a poem of nine cantos written in blank verse oddly divided into stanzas of four lines. For the ordinary reader, unbiassed by scholarly, antiquarian or historical interests, even the poetry of Dante has to struggle hard disburthening itself of a vision of life more alien to the modern mind than the concepts of the Greek and Latin poets. To those who desire poetry the narrative and background of Dante's poem are a veil shutting out the light. For a modern poet to adopt the same form is to invite much weariness. The poet of *The New Inferno* is escorted by a guiding spirit through regions of the lower world where he sees successively Napoleon, the souls of those who on earth indulged their appetites, self-slayers, and others, and various ethical problems, such as the reason for the creation of dangerous drugs, are inconclusively solved. The poem closes upon a note of hope for all souls alike. The book is not without true poetry, especially in the eighth canto, where we enter " the sea of lawless thoughts." But as the early allegory, *Eremus*, was ill-fashioned, so is this. Not one of the latest volumes contained poetry to match the *Poems* of 1897. *Lyrics and Dramas* does nothing to enhance our conception of Phillips' powers as a poet. Nearly all the pieces are short and trivial lyric musings. Two narrative poems, ' Prosperity ' and ' The Blow ' do not, however, fail to embody the tragic emotion of either story ; and ' Shakespeare ' exhibits the poet's earlier command of language. But these are insufficient to redeem a volume of verses seldom touched by any powerful overflow of feeling.

Mr. Laurence Binyon is Stephen Phillips' cousin ; in

Primavera, the small paper-covered volume of 1890, their poems appeared side by side, and features of likeness more essential may be found in their work. More than a dozen years ago Mr. Archer declared that the talent of Mr. Binyon was epic; Mr. Streatfield was equally persuaded that it was lyric. At that time he was to be judged as a writer of epic poetry by *Porphyrion* (1898), a blank-verse narrative poem of fifteen hundred lines, and since he has attempted nothing that aims at epic breadth, for the blank verse *Penthesilea* (1905) is shorter by five hundred lines. Mr. Archer was carried away with admiration for the romantic glow of poetry in *Porphyrion*, a poetry which is, however, lyrical and destroys rather than supports the claim of the poem to be considered an epic. The subject is that of many a youthful poem—an allegory of the soul's quest. A young man of Antioch, fascinated by the principle of Christian asceticism flies to the desert, but an apparition of magical beauty changes his nature, and he returns to the world in search of ideal loveliness. The theme of *Penthesilea*, which tells how the Queen of the Amazons sought death at the hand of Achilles in expiation for having slain her sister unwittingly, is more tolerant of epic treatment. But that Mr. Binyon is lyrical by gift is proved by the aridity of *Penthesilea;* it has, less than *Porphyrion*, the glow and fervour of poetry, for the poet is tormented by the necessity to narrate. In the earlier poem he had a lyric theme and treated it in lyric blank verse; in the later he has a tale to tell, and he drops into mere narration. Narrative in blank verse scarcely constitutes an epic poem, and the lyrical *Porphyrion* with its more human note, the finely imaginative passages descriptive of scenes in desert and city, its less apparent artifice and greater spontaneity is the poem of the two that better endures a second reading. Yet it is by no means an outstanding poem. As the cadences of *Penthesilea* inevitably call to mind the second version of *Hyperion*, so *Porphyrion* is reminiscent of Milton's blank verse. Both poems serve to persuade us that Mr. Binyon's gift of poetry lies in a vague, dreamy lyricism, sometimes inspired by life but more often by literature.

Laurence Binyon, b. 1869.

In 1890 Mr. Binyon won the Newdigate with a poem on *Persephone*, and in the same year he published a few poems in *Primavera*, which call for no comment. Nor do the volumes that follow, *Lyrical Poems* (1894), *Poems* (1895) and *The Praise of Life* (1896) reveal any noteworthy advance in poetical powers, strength of thought or imaginative gifts. And often Mr. Binyon is capable of being dull or lapsing into ugly crudities of thought and phrase. His verse-writing first showed distinction in the two parts of *London Visions* (1896–99), which were republished in an augmented edition in 1908. In expression and style *London Visions* showed individuality; but as an observer of life Mr. Binyon is too academic. To read these descriptions of varied and motley humanity is but to be forcibly reminded of their flatness when compared with the full-blooded buoyancy of a Walt Whitman, or, to take a more modern contrast, the humorous cynicism of Mr. James Stephens in portraying character. Mr. Binyon's poems do not reveal or flash London upon us; he is at his best when he abandons the effort, unnatural to him, of realistic observation and writes poems like 'The Threshold' in the form of an ode, or becomes purely subjective and lyrical as in 'Trafalgar Square.' Poems like 'Whitechapel High Road' and 'The Road Menders,' which aim at realistic painting, are laboured and monotonous and fail to bring life near. As a literal rendering of things seen by far the best poem of the two volumes is 'The Little Dancers.' But, in general, Mr. Binyon's observation of life and types fails to illuminate, save when he turns aside, as he does in 'Salvation Seekers,' to comment on psychological causes.

At this time Mr. Binyon's highest achievement in pure poetry was 'The Threshold,' and it was not surprising that he reprinted this poem in his fine volume of *Odes* (1901.) The *Odes* and *Porphyrion* show more of true inspiration than any other part of his work as a poet; for in the *Odes* 'The Dryad,' 'The Bacchanal of Alexander,' 'Amasis' and the third part of 'The Death of Tristram' are finely conceived and impassioned poems. To quote a short passage from any of these would be to do Mr. Binyon an injustice; but without cavil he has

never done greater work than in 'The Bacchanal of Alexander,' a spirited poem, filled with the glow and colour of the summer scene and riotous abandon of life it describes.

The Death of Adam and other Poems (1903) adds nothing of real value to his earlier work. The verse and imagery of the title-poem are too strongly reminiscent of Keats's *Hyperion* to give pleasure. Of the shorter poems the beautiful 'Santa Cristina' may alone compare with the best of his earlier lyrics, and it is disfigured by the choppiness of the rhyming octave couplets.

Dream Come True (1905) contains a collection of formal and metaphysical love-lyrics; and *Paris and Œnone* (1906) and *Attila* (1907) are blank-verse tragedies. None of these, either dramatically or poetically, is of especial interest. The verse is not easily flexible; and in *Attila* too classical in character to lend itself to the semi-barbaric scene. Meredith's wonderful poem on the same subject is a far more realistic and vivid painting of barbaric and brutal life in the camp of the Huns. *Auguries* (1913) contains grave and regular verse embodying the not too eager musings and emotions of a cultivated, thoughtful, but not original mind. 'The Tram' reverts, not unsuccessfully, to the method of realistic painting of drab life early essayed in *London Visions*. In 'The Mirror,' a finely expressed poem, the words catch some fire from a genuine emotion; but we are left unmoved by the serene and self-conscious writing of nearly every other poem in the volume.

Mr. Binyon did not again approximate to the standard of his writing in *Porphyrion* and the *Odes* till eight years passed and he published in 1909 *England and other Poems*. At least three poems of this volume, 'Sirmione,' 'Ruan's Voyage' and 'Milton,' stand with the best of his work. 'Sirmione' has the colour, passion and descriptive power of the odes in the volume of 1901. In the magic of pure poetry Mr. Binyon has never surpassed 'Ruan's Voyage,' a narrative poem written in varied metres. His touch is wonderfully sure. As an example of swift painting, the scene in which Ruan, the fisherman, opens the magic box and three hundred years pass over him in the flight of a moment may be quoted—

"Ere he can pray, ere he can groan,
Swift as grass in a furnace thrown,
Or a crumbled clod in a heedless hand,
He withers into whitened bone.
Where his breathing body stood,
Flushed with life and warm with blood,
Is a heap of ashes, a drift of sand,
And the wind blowing, and the silent strand."

Mr. Binyon's verse has by no means the constant note of unconscious and unpremeditated song; he gains his ends deliberately, with self-knowledge, and, with some exception, the clear passion of true poetry is only to be found in *Porphyrion*, the *Odes*, in two or three of the poems in *London Visions* and in *England*. His work rarely fails to do him credit as a scholar and student of literature, but genuine poetry springs from life and not from books, and Mr. Binyon, even in his poems of premeditated realism, is not closely in touch with substantial human nature; in less than half his writing does he escape an attitude of chilly and academic detachment. He is, therefore, more the poet when he departs from everyday life to kingdoms of myth, mysticism or pure imagination. His poetry combines the qualities of fine scholarship, cultivated taste and a nature sensitive to the ideal of beauty. He never offends against good feeling; he is not guilty of meaningless crudities like the allegory of Phillips' *Eremus*, the dull purposelessness of 'The Wife' or the false *dénouement* of *The Sin of David* and *Pietro of Siena*. To compare the work of the two writers is to recognise that in the immediacy of a poetry which springs from the void unsought Phillips far surpassed Mr. Binyon, for it is only occasionally in the poetry of the latter that we escape a consciousness of effort, labour and the use of the file. In sudden and unexpected surprises of thought and phrase, in the picture-making quality of his words, in wealth of imagery Mr. Binyon, save rarely, falls short of Stephen Phillips' highest attainment in the *Poems*, *Paolo and Francesca* and *Ulysses*. For Mr. Binyon is, like Pater, the academic æsthete, he is never sufficiently in contact with the stress and bustle of a rough and hard-driven world—in a word, his poetry is never full-blooded.

Save that Mr. Maurice Hewlett is more impassioned and more intimately in sympathy with men and women as creatures of flesh and blood, much that has been said of Mr. Binyon applies with equal relevance to his work as a poet. His volumes of verse do not give proof of a gift of poetry prodigally bestowed. Much of his writing is suggestive of restrained declamation rather than poetry; neither words nor thoughts are winged. And, further, the level of attainment is monotonously even—just words in a sufficiently good order, but rarely the best words in the best order. In the first two volumes the emotion of the reader is never roused, and in not a line is there the fire of lyric inspiration. Neither in phrase or melody has Mr. Hewlett's early verse any spontaneity. His poetry is the verse of a man gifted with a fine sense of literature and not devoid of passion, although he expresses himself better in prose than in verse. Of poetry in a transcendent sense Mr. Hewlett has scarcely written a line.

Maurice Hewlett, b. 1861.

A Masque of Dead Florentines (1895), written partly in rhyming octosyllables and partly in iambic pentameters, presents a processional passage of the Florentine dead—Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and others—and gives evidence of a mind tempered to the splendour and fascination of Florentine history, but the poetry has no spell or charm. *Songs and Meditations* (1897) is divided, as the title indicates, into two parts, and in neither is Mr. Hewlett notably successful. The gift of quick song is not his, and he is not genuinely meditative by temperament. A scholarly romanticism eked out with an interest in the intrusion of the passions is the groundwork of Mr. Hewlett's writing. Among the songs of his second volume of verse 'Divæ Genetricis Laudes' has ampler music and imagination; but more beautiful is the short poem of three stanzas, 'Iseult of the Mill,' in which Mr. Hewlett adopts the manner of folk-song.

Artemision: Idylls and Songs (1909) followed its precursor in verse at a distance of twelve years, but the poems contained in this volume were written 1895–98, and this was evidently a period in which Mr. Hewlett gave himself almost entirely to the writing of verse, before popularity

with the short story and novel led him in another direction, for the three dramatic poems of *The Agonists* (1911) belong in date of composition to the same years. *Artemision* opens with three long poems on classical themes, ' Leto's Child,' ' The Niobids ' and ' Latmos,' followed by sonnets and lyrics, some of them reprinted from *Songs and Meditations*. These poems do not serve to alter a conviction that Mr. Hewlett's primary gift is not that of the poet. His use of English is always good, but pedantic, mannered and rigid, yielding no nuances of thought or phrase, no flashes of inspiration or poetic felicity. And his ear is defective. This shortcoming Mr. Hewlett has the wit to see, for he informs us in *Artemision* that a number of the poems are to be read as prose that the correct stress may be found and the poems resolve themselves into verse. The same warning is posted in the preface to *The Agonists*, and we are, therefore, on our guard. Whether prose may be scanned by the method of Professor Saintsbury is a question that may be left in doubt, but all will agree that when the cadences of prose fall into the metre of verse we are reading bad prose. Nevertheless, all good prose has its ordered balance of rhythms. The greater part of the world's verse is written to strict metres, because in ordinary speech the stronger the emotion, the stronger and more rapid in recurrence is the stress of the voice, and poetry is the noblest form of emotional utterance. But verse that only appears as verse when read as prose is another matter and a strange anomaly. The only consequence of reading Mr. Hewlett's verse on his own principles is that it resolves itself into bad and weak prose.

> " Being so fair thou art holy
> Even as Beatrice is,
> Sister-torches of God,
> Twin pastures untrod,
> Handmaidens meek and lowly,
> Consecrate priestesses,
> To heaven dedicate wholly."
> (*Donna è gentil*—.)

What is this but staccato and jerky prose ? It only stirs a regret that phrases so good should be so ill conjoined.

In *The Agonists*, to which, fortunately, he has been able to give more time, Mr. Hewlett is more successful, and there is a music in his verse though we read it in the dispassionate temper of prose. The three dramatic poems of the volume, written in irregular and constantly diversified forms of rhymed and unrhymed verse, are, in force, flexibility and human interest, the highest attainment of Mr. Hewlett in poetry. Further, these three poems have a philosophical basis and lead up to an epilogue, not yet published, on the passion of Christ, wherein it will be shown that "the divine qualities can only mate with human faculty in the ideal presented to mankind in the Incarnate God of the Christians." 'Minos, King of Crete,' 'Ariadne in Naxos' and 'The Death of Hyppolytus' illustrate the failure of the ancient concepts of the relation of God to Man, in that the essential qualities of God—Power, Love and Knowledge—were never combined in the individual. The problem of the poems is, in brief, the question tortured by Browning into many shapes—the relationship of love and knowledge in the individual life.

Helen Redeemed (1913) is another of Mr. Hewlett's poems based on a classic subject, this time written in heroics, but of so rough a kind that for many lines the words stagger, trot and amble in helpless confusion. It may be possible to find an iambic scansion for such a line as

> "Shed; nor yet so the end for Heré cried,"

or

> "His hand over the crupper, of such girth,"

but only with violence to word-stresses. Nevertheless, this epic in eleven stages of Troy's fall and the redemption of Helen through a second treachery is eloquent; and in the later passages of the poem Mr. Hewlett uses his metre with a better grace and skill. But, in all, the poem is monotonous as nearly all poetry is fated to be which translates the poet to an age so distant that the characters can never be other than super-human and meaningless. The poem as a whole but serves to confirm the impression we gain from all Mr. Hewlett's earlier volumes of verse. Knowledge, thought, independence

and a gift of eloquent language he does not lack; but there are no surprises, no unforgettable beauties, no magic in phrase or analogy, which mark the presence of genius.

If Mr. Hewlett reminds us of any poets before him it is of Browning and Meredith; but chiefly of the latter. At the best, however, he is only a pale reflection. He has nothing of Browning's music or swift onrush, little of Meredith's originality in thought. But he shares something with Meredith's manner; and, like Browning, he derives the substance and background of his poetry from Italy, the Renaissance and Pagan mythology. The preface to *The Agonists*, in which Mr. Hewlett makes his profession of faith, is a little surprising, for nearly all his poetry suggests a pagan temper, a dislike of asceticism and a flirting with the voluptuous. Beyond this it is true, however, that we can detect the detached and impersonal nature. And therefore, on the whole, he has only reached true poetry in the philosophical series of *The Agonists*, a poetry which flows strongly, is permeated with colour and steeped in knowledge of classic lore and myth.

Charles Montagu Doughty, b. 1843.

In 1875, Mr. Charles Montagu Doughty, then a young man, wandered up and down the wastes and wilds of Arabia, cut off from all intercourse with Europeans, to emerge with a knowledge of Arabia and her inhabitants given to no man of his time. Ten years after his reappearance he published his *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888) in two large volumes which showed that he was not only the explorer, but the master of a style at once precise and splendidly imaginative. *Arabia Deserta* is no book of dry-as-dust inquiry into ethnography and archæology, it belongs to literature by virtue of a prose, clearly chiselled, poetically imaginative and rich with a vocabulary of potent words. The style recalls English prose of the seventeenth century, and the style of his blank-verse epic, *The Dawn in Britain* (1906), also derives from English of the same period. The snipped idiom and vocabulary of modern prose Mr. Doughty found insufficient to his needs: and the style of his epic is also a deliberate artifice, archaic in phrase, idiom and construction, borrowing directly from Milton and Spenser.

But he has little share in the romanticism of either poet. More definitively than any living English poet Mr. Doughty stands for an intellectual and classical reaction against Victorian feeling. And difficult though it may be to read *The Dawn in Britain* as a whole (as difficult as an entire reading of the *Faerie Queene*) it leaves an impress of sheer intellectual force in which it is only surpassed by one other poem of the day—*The Dynasts*.

The dawn of which Mr. Doughty writes is the advent of Christianity in Britain, and in his poem he attempts to paint a picture of our country in the third century as realistic as the drawing of *Arabia* in his prose volumes. He aims at the intellectual realisation of a past epoch, avoiding the sentimentalism of the Arthurian legends as they are found in the Victorian poets. Perhaps the clearest and most obvious example of his intellectualism is his sedulous and painstaking rejection of the pathetic fallacy. He is guiltless of view-hunting or landscape-painting, that vice so severely lashed by Carlyle and Ruskin who sinned in common against their own theory. But Mr. Doughty notes the outer face of nature only in incidental and brief rubrics. One or two examples will illustrate the objectively intellectual character of his landscape-painting, and its wonderful truthfulness.

> "And now springs the late dawn; sun's glistering beams
> Clipping the hoary boughs, like golden hairs" (i. 62),

or

> "By fenny brooks, amongst brown bramble-brakes" (v. 76).

He hardly tries to paint an imaginative picture, even briefly. Commonly he writes of natural phenomena in a manner purely intellectual—

> "How sweet the Spring-tide, in far island-Britain,
> When soars the heavenly lark, with merry throat!" (vi. 95).

The English, or "Anglecism" as he would call it, of Mr. Doughty is, as nearly as may be, the English of Spenser. It is his belief that to Spenser, above any English poet, was given the "golden intimate tongue" of the muses. And outside English poetry Mr. Doughty's chief debt is to Homer. But the spoken word comes

before literature; and the best workman is not he who refuses to use the tools to his hand because they are not what he would wish. By the time the lesser artist has finished pottering with his tubes, his palette, his brushes and his lighting the true painter has his picture finished. And in *The Dawn in Britain* we are as often conscious of tools and the business of getting to work as of any effect gained. Bold experiments are interesting; but to walk across the river of the epic carefully balanced on a tight-rope of words serves no very useful purpose in life or art. Mr. Doughty has not succeeded in six volumes and thirty thousand lines in writing a great epic; he has experimented in an extraordinarily interesting manner with an ancient garment of speech. But the recurring use of "sith," "ben," "sheen," "wox," and other archaisms becomes as monotonous and unedifying as the larding of conversation with one or two tricks of slang. Mr. Doughty's poem can only be read, if read, as an interesting experiment in reaction.

Examples must be rare of the author who begins as a poet so late in life. Mr. Doughty was over sixty when he published *The Dawn in Britain*, but after this beginning he has continued to write at astonishing length and with surprising speed. In *Adam Cast Forth* (1908), a sacred drama in five acts of blank verse, archaic vocabulary is much less in evidence, although the texture of Mr. Doughty's "Anglecism" is still that of Spenser and the Elizabethans. His intimate knowledge of Arabia has enabled him to give a Semitic atmosphere to the whole poem. But the most readable of his writings is *The Cliffs* (1909), a long blank-verse drama which recalls, in structure and in the use of supernatural machinery, Mr. Hardy's *Dynasts*, and it would probably never have been written without inspiration from that source. The style of the poem is still archaic in its inversions and its omission of particles, but, as the time is present day, Mr. Doughty wisely shelves much of his Spenserian affectation. He chooses for his theme a dominant obsession of the English mind—invasion by Germany, and especially invasion by air. The poem opens with a long monologue by John Hobbe, a Crimean veteran who tends sheep on the cliffs of East Anglia. His soliloquy is scarcely cut

short, but, at least, curtailed in length, by the sudden landing of a Prussian ('Persic' is Mr. Doughty's word) airship containing two German officers and a machinist, who have come to spy out the land with a view to immediate invasion. This they proceed to do by discoursing at large, in the manner of the halfpenny papers, on the effeminacy, apathy and carelessness of the English. Old Hobbe springs out upon them and tries to rend their balloon with his crook. They run him through the body and depart in haste, leaving maps and other trifles on the grass. In the second part supernatural beings are introduced, Sirion, Truth, great Æons, and a company of elves who dilate, before the ruined edifice of Britannia's temple, on the low estate to which English politics and patriotism have fallen. In Part III the coastguards discover the body of Hobbe and the papers left by the Persics and return to rouse England with the news of invasion. In Part IV the temple of Britannia is seen re-edified as the result of the revival of patriotism, supernatural beings again appear with the ghosts of the great English departed, and two foreign ghosts—Napoleon and Joan of Arc. In Part V Claybourne village is discovered, guarded and patrolled by sentries, one or two English successes are related, and in conclusion the vicar of the village reads a long patriotic song which is taken up in unison by the soldiers and all present standing round the colours. The scheme of the poem is grandiose, even to the verge of the ludicrous, yet there is a largeness in the manner, an intensity, and an individual note which check the smile. Despite the fact that Mr. Doughty's tirades against the decadence of England are fatally suggestive of verse parodies upon the leading article in the halfpenny paper the impression left by the poem as a whole is of substance and breadth in conception. And, especially in Part IV Mr. Doughty has succeeded in writing some beautiful poetry; though he can also write—

> "The Medical Board reported me, as unfit for further service; and with a pension, for my wounds, I was discharged"—

and leave the reader to conjure the words into blank verse. The conclusion we are driven to is a doubt whether

the poem would ever have been written but for *The Dynasts*, and a conviction that whereas in verse and magic of language both largely fail, there is an epic strength in Mr. Hardy's poem to which Mr. Doughty never wholly attains.

The Clouds (1912) is an epilogue to *The Cliffs* in fifteen blank-verse poems. The epigraph from Spenser—"All places full of forraine powers"—gauges the state of Mr. Doughty's mind. England is overrun with invading armies till the colonies come to her assistance. Mr. Doughty's intention is good, he is not wholly without the gifts of the prophet, but for the sake of his poetry it is a matter for regret that he should be heavily overweighted with his theme. His immense gain in poetry is manifest when he escapes his obsession, as in his picture of the elves' banquet in *The Cliffs* and also in the splendid opening passage of 'The Muses' Garden' in *The Clouds*, the finest example of his writing in blank verse.

Mr. Doughty's poetry in the whole is an example of varied experiment in epic and literary drama; and, further, though he borrows his style and idiom from the most romantic of poets, his temper is classical, and the interest of his writings, especially of *The Dawn in Britain*, is their intellectual and objective manner. The subjective, romantic, emotional poetry of the last century has never touched or influenced him in his work. In the poetry of Mr. Hardy, Mr. Doughty and John Davidson we are never tempted to recall the fact that Tennyson, Swinburne and Rossetti have lived and written.

The use of dramatic monologue in a form which combined the characteristics of subjective lyricism and the objective address of the drama was a marked development of poetry in the last century. Both Tennyson and Browning have left the best of their writing in this form. The constant use of the dramatic monologue was a natural outcome of the introspectiveness of the age; it was used as an instrument of psychological analysis and a means of making poetry a more individual and realistic utterance of the heart. But Victorian poetry is a poetry of ideas, and rarely aims at concrete realism. Within recent years a tendency to depart from purely lyrical forms has become marked; a poetry of crude and violent realism, typically illustrated in the writing of Mr. Masefield, has become

the mode, and there are but few living poets who wholly escape this influence. Poets like Mr. Doughty, Stephen Phillips, Mr. Binyon, whose talents do not at all fit them to give an imitation of men and manners in their time, have yielded in some degree to a common tendency. Mr. Trench, on the other hand, is a poet of genius too individual and strong to write but in his own way; and the realism of Mr. Hardy and Mr. A. E. Housman is another matter and peculiarly their own. Perhaps in no case has a poet abandoned romantic lyricism for bald realism with so little loss in poetic content as Mr. Wilfrid Wilson Gibson.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson.

It was impossible to read his first essays in poetry without thinking by turns of Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Morris and Rossetti. It may, however, be said for Mr. Gibson that there was no need to recall Matthew Arnold or Coventry Patmore. His first volumes of verse belonged to the stained-glass tradition of Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. Between 1902 and 1905 he published in small booklets *Urlyn the Harper*, *The Queen's Vigil*, *The Nets of Love* and the slightly larger collection of *The Golden Helm;* and in *The Web of Life* (1908) he returned to the imitative lyricism of these early poems. The lyrics of these collections bear witness to Mr. Gibson's ready gift of melody and song, his facile command of metres, his power to employ a rich vocabulary without abuse, but they are imitative and wholly lack the impress of personality. The light of these poems is that of the dim cathedral aisle with sunlight burning upon the rich colours of high and painted windows. Their most strongly marked characteristic is a passion for the wan flame and the red, for bright and glancing colours, for the golden haze of atmosphere. And this passion for colour is exemplified notably in 'Faring South,' a section of *Urlyn the Harper*, which contains in short two-stanza poems of observation more strength and individuality than any other part of Mr. Gibson's volumes of collected lyric verse. His pictures in 'The Stone-breaker' and 'The Ploughman,' poems of this section, are conceived in colour. The ploughman's

> "... white share spills in dust the hot grey soil,"

the washer bending at the stream is " white-capped, red-armed," the harvester's face and throat are " copper glowing," the stone-breaker's arms are " brown " and the flints he cracks " dark-moulded," the country wife's face burns " red-golden " beneath her " snow-white " cap. The sureness of Mr. Gibson's eye and the fidelity of his painting in these few short poems differentiates them from the others ; but his lyric and narrative poems show little writing that is personal to the author.

Latterly Mr. Gibson has executed a complete *volte-face*, and has written in *The Stonefolds* (1907), *On the Threshold* (1907), *Daily Bread* (1910) and *Fires* (1912), poetic drama and dramatic poems, objective and unshrinkingly realistic in manner. Queens, forlorn damsels, knights, esquires, jousts, tourneys and scenes of mediæval romance and story had been his themes, but now he chooses for the subjects of his poems cottagers, shepherds, ferrymen, pitmen, printers, carpenters, the unemployed, he dramatises the primitive hates and loves of uncultured people, their struggle for daily bread, the courage with which they face adversity and pain, their motives, their virtues and their sins. In the first two series of dramatic poems he uses a strong and flowing blank verse. As an instrument of vigorous and straightforward expression it would be difficult to overpraise it. Its music is not strikingly varied, it is plain and affects no ornament, but it is neither end-stopt nor wearisome to the ear, and admirable for the purposes to which Mr. Gibson puts it. The early volumes gave little promise of any dramatic instinct in the author, but these short dramatic poems, containing only two to four characters apiece, are instinct with dramatic feeling, human emotions and individual characterisation. They contain more humanity and more true drama than much in poetic drama—Stephen Phillips and Mr. Binyon, for example—which has appeared on the stage.

The desire to come nearer to the heart of reality prompted Mr. Gibson to go further, and in the dramatic poems of *Daily Bread* blank verse is eschewed for ejaculatory verse in short unrhymed lines. His subjects, taken from common life, are the same, and he loses nothing in dramatic power; but his handling of blank verse was so good that it is a pity he abandoned it for the curious and trying versification

of these poems. In *Fires* he writes again of everyday and common life, but for the most part in rhyming octosyllables with variations and irregularities. Some of these poems, like 'Flannan Isle,' have a macabre and eerie twist, some, like 'The Stone,' are grim; but in concentration of power and psychical weirdness the best of the tales, 'The Old Man,' is also one of the shortest. In this poem Mr. Gibson has won astonishing success in creating an atmosphere of ghostly creepiness.

The realism of Mr. Gibson is not the impressionistic realism of Mr. Arthur Symons and other poets in the 'nineties, but the broader realism of recent years, inspired with a faith in God and human nature. These poems may be regarded as anticipatory of the attempts of Mr. Masefield to write passionately and violently of rough and common men. They illustrate a tendency, manifested recently in poets, dramatists and novelists, to give an appearance of strength to their writing by treating baldly or noisily the passions and emotions of untutored minds. In noise and blatancy nobody can claim to outrival Mr. John Masefield, whose example has reacted for evil upon smaller writers in proportion to the indubitably high gifts he possesses as a poet. His experiences as a wanderer in early life led him to begin with the nautical poems, written in sailor speech, of *Salt-water Ballads* (1902) and *Ballads* (1903). These ballads remind us of Mr. Kipling's soldier poems and the contents of *The Seven Seas*, though Mr. Masefield's melodies are not, as a rule, so naïve and simple as Mr. Kipling's. Unfortunately, even in his early poems, Mr. Masefield confuses, as he does later with great success, crudity and brutality with strength. Indifference to the death of comrades is a frequent topic of the *Salt-water Ballads*, and it is not a subject which grows more pleasing with repetition. Nor does Mr. Masefield echo the patriotism of Sir Henry Newbolt's sea-songs: his pirates, buccaneers and deck-hands on the dirty tramp steamer declare in their own tongue the wonders of sea and storm. Among the best of the poems in sailor speech are 'One of the Bo'sun's Yarns' and 'Cape Horn Gospel'; 'Captain Stratton's Fancy' is among the best of drinking-songs; and of poems not in the

John Masefield.

colloquial of the deck 'A Valediction' and the fine 'Seekers' are noteworthy. In these poems Mr. Masefield has, at least, caught the spirit of the high seas, but Mr. Kipling has written better ballads of the sea in cockney and rough slang, Sir Henry Newbolt two or three sea-songs which outdistance anything of Mr. Masefield's.

It was not till he had been writing poetry for ten years that he began to produce in the *English Review* those long poems, full of strange oaths and turbulent rhythms, which provoked either hearty admiration or scoffing ridicule. On the one hand he was hailed as the greatest genius in modern poetry, on the other held up to opprobrium as one who dragged poetry in the mire of coarse speech; and he was admirably parodied by Mr. J. Collings Squire, who had little to do but reproduce the original with slight unfaithfulness. In Mr. Masefield's poems we have the culmination of that disregard for form and the principle of beauty in all things sadly predicted by Robert Louis Stevenson. But this does not conclude the whole matter. If a large part of Mr. Masefield's later poems degenerates into slap-dash rhetoric in the dialect of the hamlet and the dirty slum, the real beauty of long passages, the vigour of utterance and conception in the whole cannot be denied. This is more especially true of *Daffodil Fields* (1913), which has passages of great beauty in its description of English country scenes. *The River* (1913) which followed it has lost the force and raciness of *The Everlasting Mercy* (1911) and *The Widow in the Bye-street* (1912), without any compensations. Of these realistic novels in verse the best as a complete poem is *Dauber* (1912), the chronicle of a voyage and the story of a youth who dreamed of becoming a great painter. It is less violent than its immediate predecessors, more coherent in narrative, but little broken in upon by prosy moralising and only slightly disfigured by rhyme for rhyme's sake. And the description of storms and icy winds off Cape Horn is one of the greatest things of its kind in verse—the utter desolation and wild abandon of sea and sky are wonderfully vivid in the telling.

It cannot be denied that these rough-and-ready poems are a form of literature alive in every line, springing unthought from a sensitive nature responsive to every

influence of life: their weakness lies in the unfortunate self-consciousness of Mr. Masefield in his attempts to gain strength by crude violences to language and rhythm. In *Daffodil Fields* the metre is often hideously uncouth. The use of foul words and the realistic description of brutal scenes lends no additional vigour to the poems; for Mr. Masefield writes far better when he forgets these things. And, further, the passages of religious and worldly-wise comment interpolated in the narrative are, as often as not, ludicrous in their context. It is incredible that the converted sinner of *The Everlasting Mercy* should move with facile fluency from telling with gusto the story of his evil life to playing his own chorus in pious refrain. And the interpolations of *The Widow in the Bye-street* are even more incongruous. It is difficult to read with patience this warning against wicked and designing beauty—

> "So tea was made, and down they sat to drink;
> O the pale beauty sitting at the board!
> There is more death in women than we think,
> There is much danger in the souls adored,
> The white hands bring the poison and the cord,
> Death has a lodge in lips as red as cherries,
> Death has a mansion in the yew-tree berries."

Ancient maxims, wholly out of place, are here introduced by violence; they serve no purpose of beauty or moral appeal. And the passage quoted illustrates a persistent fault of these slap-dash poems—the subservience of matter and sense to rhyme. The only business of the fourth and fifth lines is to provide rhymes to "board." It is no universal truth that "there is much danger in the souls adored"; and the statement interests us as much as if Mr. Masefield said "there is much danger in going to sea in ships." It simply was not worth saying; and line after line, passage after passage, was not worth writing. Ugly and unnecessary faults abound. The great merit of these poems, doubtless, is their sincere whole-heartedness and their real beauty when the poet forgets men and writes of nature. If Coleridge's dictum that poetry should equally give pleasure in the parts as in the whole be applied as a test Mr. Masefield's poems fail. Much of his narrative writing in verse is ugly, noisy, violent; he is not, with all

his display of realism, as true to simple and essential humanity as, to give but one example of a tuneful poet, Mr. A. E. Housman, and dramatically these poems are not as convincing as Mr. W. W. Gibson's essays in a similar kind of writing. All that Mr. Masefield has hitherto written leaves us with the impression that he has not wholly found himself. He possesses a strongly human, full-blooded and sincerely religious view of life, he makes the reader conscious of the tragic mystery of existence, of life's ethical claims, of the largeness of man's inheritance. In this he shares something with the inspiriting influence belonging to the writing of Meredith, although his ideas are, by comparison, wanting in originality. And it is curious that he has never given himself forth as well or as completely in imaginative work as in a short book of prose criticism. His critique of *Shakespeare* (1911) is the most original thing Mr. Masefield has written, the book in which he says more than he says elsewhere and expresses more of himself. In a small book of less than two hundred widely printed pages he has succeeded in saying something fresh, although he writes after nearly two hundred years busy with commentary upon Shakespeare.

Lascelles Abercrombie, b. 1881.

Among living English poets Mr. Masefield and Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie have gained a reputation more rapidly than others. A few years ago they were virtually unknown: to-day their names carry what appears to many an established fame in the English world of letters. And, despite much dissimilarity, a certain likeness in method and ideal may be discovered in their work. In the roughness and crude energy of Mr. Abercrombie's 'Blind' and 'Mary: A Legend of the '45' there is much to remind us of the series of poems Mr. Masefield inaugurated with *The Everlasting Mercy*. But whereas Mr. Masefield inspires us with the belief that he writes *currente calamo*, Mr. Abercrombie's force is obviously only won at the cost of protracted labour—the similes, metaphors, vocabulary are often far-fetched and elaborated with difficulty. And this appearance of strain and effort is a failing which inheres not only in those poems in which we can point a parallelism with Mr. Masefield, but in

others, more in number, which may be described as metaphysical rather than realistic or romantic in character.

The *Interludes and Poems* (1908) contained the realistic drama 'Blind,' four metaphysical dialogue poems, 'The New God,' 'The Fool's Adventure,' 'An Escape' and 'Peregrinus,' and some shorter pieces. Following upon this volume came the delicate and truly beautiful *Mary and the Bramble* (1910), and the over-long and pointless *Sale of Saint Thomas* (1911). In *Emblems of Love* (1912), the largest collection of verse he has hitherto published, Mr. Abercrombie continued to treat, either realistically or metaphysically, questions of sex and love. The two finest poems of the volume, 'Vashti' and 'Judith,' are based on scriptural themes.

Mr. Abercrombie possesses a wide vocabulary and one peculiar to himself; and this has led many to regard him as a strong poet who expresses himself with a ready gusto. But the more closely his poetry is examined the more definitely it appears as literary in its inspiration and wrought out with pains and difficulty. He often uses daring and splendid images. When he writes of

> "the world
> From the soft delicate floor of grass to those
> Rafters of light and hanging cloths of stars,"

or again writes—

> "And then a hundred beasts of wind leap howling,
> And pounce upon the roof with worrying paws,"

we do not easily forget metaphors so extravagantly splendid. But as often Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie becomes merely grandiose in his efforts. He can write meaningless nonsense. Thus he tells of the elder gods, degraded to a place of darkness, how

> "Often their drownéd agony shall heave
> Large sobs from under, till the shoulder'd pit
> Plunges, the blind cumber of the useless mire."

The clumsy words and preposterously awkward phrasing in these lines almost entirely obscure the image present to the poet's mind. Again in—

> "You hear the chime of frowning lipping water
> Trodden to chattering falsehood by the keels
> Of kings' happiness,"

he can be guilty of grotesque confusion in metaphor. And these are but examples that may easily be matched.

Mr. Abercrombie's thought is derivative and indirect; his style is a cultivated artifice. Of all the younger poets of to-day he has the most definitely metaphysical bent of mind. He is thus often led into regions where poetry is singularly ineffective. Like Donne, of whom he sometimes reminds us, he is the better poet in his lapses of memory, when he forgets conceits, artifice and metaphysic. Decidedly Mr. Abercrombie is in the succession of Donne when he writes—

> "Yea, Love, we are thine, the liturgy of thee,
> Thy thought's golden and glad name,
> The mortal conscience of immortal glee,
> Love's zeal in Love's own glory."

This metaphysical bent is most clearly exhibited in his *Interludes and Poems*, and of poems in this vein 'Peregrinus' and 'The Fool's Adventure' are the most successful. But the thought could often be expressed in good prose better than in Mr. Abercrombie's roughly-handled, unrhyming lines. Only too frequently his verse pounds and staggers, and we remember Dr. Johnson's curt dismissal of those who thought that not to write prose was most certainly to write poetry. It is a misfortune that Mr. Abercrombie should strive to achieve a stucco grandeur when he can, as in *Mary and the Bramble*, write with a beautiful simplicity. In 'Judith' and 'Vashti,' furthermore, there are arresting passages of imaginative poetry; and the fine ode on 'Indignation' is so wrought that it exalts the ethical consciousness, despite its crude and halting rhythm. But too large a part of his verse reflects a process of purely intellectual manufacture.

Happily he succeeded in *Deborah* (1913), a blank-verse drama of four acts, in shaking off pedantries and affectations. The scene is in humble life, a fishing village on river marshes by the sea. A plague sweeps the village. Saul, the pilot, forces the doctor to visit first his son, Barnaby, and thus saves his life; but the delay results

in the death of David, Deborah's lover. Nevertheless, Deborah forgives, and, after the death of Saul, cherishes Barnaby, who indirectly cost her the life of her lover. The play closes with the tragic death of Miriam, David's younger sister, who bears an illegitimate child to Barnaby. In the last act Miriam thinks she hears the Gabriel hounds howling in the wind for her baby's soul. The irony of circumstance, after the manner of Mr. Thomas Hardy, is the *motif* of this poem, incomparably the simplest and most powerful Mr. Abercrombie has yet written. In place of tortured involutions he here uses a verse that is direct and rapid in movement.

But, all in all, Mr. Abercrombie appears to be an example of the man who writes poetry not because he must, but because he has something to say and has sufficient intellectual force to compass by purposeful industry a certain range of poetic expression.

§ 2

In everyday life we fight a guerilla warfare with time, harassed by the knowledge that while *we* are mortal our enemy, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, is "not subject to casualities." But in the perspective of the past the malice of time is forgotten, our petty defeats lose their bitterness, and time appears as an old friend who only of late has become unfriendly, trapping and waylaying us in our footsteps. For memory is an artist who keeps in mind none save the sunny hours, omitting all that is inessential to the good of life. And the common instinct of man does likewise, keeping only the poetry and literature which is the same in all ages, not merely good for the generation in which it was written. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, in all probability, the greater number of the poets named in this book, with all their poems, will only be matter for comparative study by the literary expert. Many he will not trouble to include in his history of English literature in the twentieth century; others will be known only by his mention of them, for they will be read by nobody; and three or four, perhaps, will yet find readers. But our loves and our hopes are conditioned by

our environment, changing with each generation and half-generation. The poet of the eighteenth century, curtly dismissed by the historian of to-day with a bare name and date, once moved a few hearts more strongly than poets of the same period whom we all know and are supposed to read. Nobody now cares for Bowles, but Bowles turned Coleridge to poetry, and he may therefore be accounted part author of the *Ancient Mariner*. Thus those who live and write to-day, only to be forgotten to-morrow, are creating the greater songs and greater poets of the future, knowing not how or when. As Bowles inspired Coleridge and brought Wordsworth to a halt on Westminster Bridge, so poets not for all time but of an age are for *us* of that age; for we cannot discriminate with the wisdom and wide knowledge of those who are happy in coming after us. Time quickly hunts the greater part of printed poetry into holes and corners: and it is most natural in treating of other poets of the last twenty-five years to follow a rough chronological method, gathering into this section poetry belonging in part to the 'nineties and in part to this century, reserving for the next section poets who have written almost wholly within the present century.

A few poets have yet to be named who wrote either for the *Yellow Book* or for Henley's publications, and of these Mr. Laurence Housman, brother of the author of *The Shropshire Lad*, deserves, for the versatility and individuality of his work, to be placed first. Mr. A. E. Housman is a one book man; his brother is an illustrator, a poet, a novelist, a critic, a dramatist. To most readers he is known as the author of *An Englishwoman's Love Letters* (1900), one of the poorest and least characteristic of his writings. A number of his illustrations, chiefly of a grotesque and fanciful kind, appeared in the *Yellow Book;* he has also illustrated Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, Meredith's *Jump to Glory Jane* and a number of his own books. As a poet he is to be counted with the inner circle of the mystics, for he often writes in hieroglyphs of no meaning to the exoteric mind. He has written five volumes of verse, haunted with a mystic consciousness and a spirit of morbid self-abasement before

Laurence Housman, b. 1867.

the thrones, dominations and powers of this universe, verse which places him at the opposite pole to his brother. The severe simplicity, the clear-eyed stoicism give place to cryptic involvements and a tangled spirituality. In wistfulness and melancholy the minds of the brothers meet, but while one faces life's complexities " abashless," to use Francis Thompson's word, the younger brother is diffident and abashed to find himself alive. The note of morbid spiritual wistfulness makes the poems of *Green Arras* (1896), *Rue* (1899) and *Spikenard* (1898) almost unreadable save to the mind rightly attuned. The atmosphere of these poems is that of Mediæval Catholicism, with its renunciation of the passions and its desire for virgin purity. *Spikenard* is a series of mystical rhapsodies following the cycle of the ecclesiastical year : *Rue* is the simplest and most intelligible of these volumes. Of the technical beauty of the verse there can be no question, though Mr. Laurence Housman does not rival his brother in mastery of the simplest forms.

In *Mendicant Rhymes* (1906) we escape to a healthier and more human atmosphere, emerging from the ecstasies of the hermit's cell and the meditations of the cloister to the open air, the inn and the battle-field. And when in occasional poems he reverts to doctrinal mysticism it is with new power, especially in the opening stanza of the impressive ' Deus Noster Ignis Consumens '—

> " To Him be praise who made
> Desire more fair than rest:
> Better the prayer while prayed,
> Than the attained bequest.
> Man goes from strength to strength,
> Fresh from each draught of pain,
> Only to fail at length
> Of heights he could not gain."

The emotional strength of writing like this raises the poem far above the morbid, obscure and tenebrous mysticism of the earlier volumes : it is like escaping from a cave of shadowy unrealities to a bright and clear sky. But as a draughtsman and as a poet Mr. Laurence Housman is the direct descendant of the Pre-Raphaelites; and the greater part of his verse writing is almost unintelligibly mystical. This is, nevertheless, far from being

his only mood. In prose he can be realistic, and even effectively satirical.

Richard Le Gallienne, b. 1866.

Mr. Richard Le Gallienne is in poetry ten years the senior of Mr. Laurence Housman, but he traces his ancestry a shorter distance, to Oscar Wilde, and thus indirectly he has a distant kinship to the Pre-Raphaelite movement. In other respects his poetry has no resemblance to that of Mr. Housman, save in a slender strain of mysticism and a dreamy detachment from practical life. Unfortunately Mr. Le Gallienne, struggling to find himself in the midst of uncongenial surroundings, was caught in the whirl of the æsthetic movement and swept off his feet. He received an indifferent education and from school was passed on to a business office in Liverpool. But he was born with an unforced passion for fine literature, and, at the age of twenty-one, when Oscar Wilde was the dominant power, he printed privately *My Ladies' Sonnets* (1887), and five years later appeared a much larger volume of *English Poems* (1892). Most of these poems are painfully immature and unrestrained: frequently, as in the erotic 'Hesperides,' they degenerate into mere gush. Apart from the æstheticism of Wilde the chief influence traceable is that of Keats. The spenserians of 'Paolo and Francesca' are imitated from Keats, not Spenser; 'An Epithalamium' is loaded with ornament; and a few pieces of doggerel remind us of Keats's attempts in the same manner of verse. But Keats was never so unrestrained, so luscious, so careless in phrase and imagery. And although Keats in his early poems has many lapses in taste, versification, rhyme and image, he offers compensating beauties. On the other hand there is not much good poetry in the *English Poems;* and when Mr. Le Gallienne attempts the grand style he inclines to bombast.

"With thunderous splendour of my rhythmic ire,"

is a line both cacophonous and ridiculous in its exaggeration. Mr. Le Gallienne is always too effusive in these poems. He has no respect for the individual word, and this is a great failing. That he was not altogether without the power of writing restrained and simple poetry he showed in the beautiful 'Child's Evensong' and 'In Her

Diary' ; but the volume, as a whole, was deplorably ill-balanced.

Happily in the three years that elapsed before the publication of *Robert Louis Stevenson, an Elegy, and other Poems* (1895) Mr. Le Gallienne learned much. The gush has almost disappeared, as in the nature of things was to be expected, for the poems are chiefly personal, in the form of elegy or verse-epistle. The title-poem is not without grace and felicity, although the apostrophe to Stevenson, as "Virgil of prose," is not very apt. 'Tree-worship' is another poem exhibiting a marked advance upon the earlier writing. The analogy, it is true, contained in the line—

"Thy latticed column jetted up the bright blue air,"

is not illuminating in its reference to a massive and gnarled tree-stem ; and——

"Thy rugged girth the waists of fifty Eastern girls,"

is an example of far-fetched imagery which brings toppling down to the associations of the seraglio the dignity of a mighty tree, described in the preceding line as "huge as a minster." But Mr. Le Gallienne is prone to these slips of disproportion in image and thought. His rhymes, also, are often fetched from a far country. Perhaps the one poem of this volume which will always find a place in English anthologies is the simple and moving "Second Crucifixion."

A long interval, during which Mr. Le Gallienne abandoned his native country for the United States, elapsed before he published in 1910 a collection of *New Poems*, which opened with a series evidently inspired by the Boer War, although the poet does not, like Henley and Mr. Kipling, sing the praises of the strong. Rather he is on the side of the little peoples who ask only to be left

". . . little margins, waste ends of land and sea,
A little grass, and a hill or two, and a shadowing tree."

In this, 'The Cry of the Little Peoples,' and a few other poems of the volume there is a clear passion, a simplicity in thought and style, which places them above his attainment in the early books of verse ; but often, again, he attempts no more than prettiness. Examples of careless

and exaggerated writing are still not infrequent. It is curious that so late in life Mr. Le Gallienne could print anything so inexpressive as—

> "London, that mighty sob, that splendid tear,
> That jewel hanging in the great world's ear."

This says nothing, and helps us not a jot to understand London. Compare with this Mr. Symons' poems on London, and the difference in subtlety, power of observation and expression is manifest.

Mr. Le Gallienne's verse-volumes can only excite a regret that they contain work so inadequate as a reflection of the author's poetical faculty. He is no literary hodman; but instability and want of intellectual force have hampered all his efforts. He has said better what there is in him to say in the prose sketches and criticism of *The Book Bills of Narcissus* (1889), *Prose Fancies* (1894–96), *Retrospective Reviews* (1896) and *Little Dinners with the Sphinx* (1909), which show that he has fancy, imagination, a genuine love of good literature, critical powers above the average and the happy gift of writing nervous English in cadences pleasing to the ear.

Arthur Christopher Benson, b. 1862.

The distance we may travel in twenty years is borne in upon us when we discover that the *Yellow Book*, regarded once as typical of brilliant and youthful originality, contained verses by Mr. Arthur Christopher Benson. With the ideas of the central group connected with that magazine he had, it is needless to say, nothing in common. In all Mr. Benson has written some five volumes of verse since the privately printed *Le Cahier Jaune* (1892); and a collected edition of his poems appeared in 1909. Yet he has confessed that he has no illusions about his verse, writing it only as an exercise in style. It is little probable that verse written in this spirit and to this end will be of a high order, or indeed, save by a kind of inadvertence, ever reach the level of poetry. And both in the verse and prose of Mr. Benson too much has been sacrificed to style, for, at last, even style has gone, and Mr. Benson's prose, which, at first, had distinction, has slipped into mellifluous garrulity. But his prose is easy to read, his thought does not tax

the mind; he is chiefly known as a journalistic essayist, and scarcely at all as a poet.

The *Poems* of 1893 opens with a pretentious preface, coming from the hand of a writer unknown, displaying the profound interest in himself which has never failed Mr. Benson. He asserts his faith that to be a man is more than to be an artist, that the simple experiences of life are unchanging behind the burning questions of the hour, that there is a Divinity shaping our ends, and he tells us that his poems try "to present certain aspects of men and nature that have come home to him with force." The contents of this and succeeding volumes—*Lyrics* (1895), *Lord Vyet and Other Poems* (1896), *The Professor and Other Poems* (1900), *Peace and Other Poems* (1905), scarcely fill in the outline sketch of this preface. Mr. Benson is graceful, clear, restfully meditative, he draws apt little morals from all that he sees, from the creeping beetle to the floating thistle-down, but he never, whether he writes of man or nature, comes sufficiently near to his theme to hold the reader. This is specially true of his poems on men. In the lines written to Dean Swift the poet asks what deductions are to be drawn from Swift's life-story, and answers—

> "This: that our days are wholly incomplete;—
> Some baseness mars them, some unbanished taint,
> That clogs in miry ways the aspiring feet,
> And specks the robe of many a willing saint."

Swift himself was no great preacher, but he would have been surprised at this prosy moral pointed by his life. In a few poems of men—'My Friend,' 'The Dead Poet' and 'Lord Vyet'—Mr. Benson does write effectively and strongly. But he is at his best in poems of nature, for he can observe closely and paint in graceful words the brooding quiet and subdued colouring of English lawns and meadows. Unfortunately he thinks it incumbent upon him to deduce a trite moral from every scene and incident. The burrowing mole reminds the poet that "beneath free air and merry sun" he is shut in by "dark fancies"; the ugly toad suggests that man dreams of loveliness and is blind to truth; the brief existence of the glittering dragon-fly bids him remember that man's

life is short. There is a monotony in these moral deductions which neither say anything new nor express the old with any originality. Mr. Benson handles his metres sufficiently well, his style is exact and careful, he is graceful and consistent, but in verse he never achieves the distinction he has attained in his earlier prose. As a poet he is no more than the writer of meditative verses containing a philosophy of smooth and cultured sentimentalism.

Henry Charles Beeching, b. 1859.

Dean Beeching, country clergyman, poet, essayist and editor, is known as a poet by his share in *Love in Idleness* (1883), *Love's Looking-glass* (1891, which contained also poems by Mr. J. W. Mackail and Mr. J. B. Nichols), but chiefly by *In a Garden* (1895). It is by the last volume that he is to be judged as a poet and writer of contemplative verses, pleasant and graceful like those of Mr. A. C. Benson, though never original or stimulating. His poetry is inspired by the secluded quiet of an English rectory garden, but it is almost entirely wanting in the personal emotion and truthfulness of Mr. Norman Gale's pastoral poems. Flowers, lawns and garden-ways are seen through the veil of familiar acquaintance with the best that is in English poetry. Yet his writing is never signally weak or monotonously trite; it gives pleasure if not exhilaration; and he avoids the tiresome habit of discovering parables in nature. In 'Accidia' and 'Love Unreturned' Dean Beeching has written good sonnets, and the strong and simple 'Heart and Wit' is an outstanding poem. But in sincerity, directness and mastery of language several of the religious pieces stand with the best of his work. 'The Tree of Life' and 'Prayers' are both poems that will bear many readings. Apart from these perhaps the most truly beautiful of his poems is contained in the section entitled 'In a Garden'":

> "Rose and lily, white and red,
> From my garden garlanded,
> These I brought and thought to grace
> The perfection of thy face.
> Other roses, pink and pale,
> Lilies of another vale,
> Thou hast bound around thy head
> In the garden of the dead."

In this short poem Dean Beeching rises above versification into the plane of true poetry. But in all he belongs to the class of poets who are made not born. In verse his content is thin; he rarely rises above quiet meditativeness expressed in words he has learned and borrowed of good literature. His best work lies elsewhere, in the writing of those delightful and charming volumes of miscellany, *Papers from a Private Diary* (1898) and *Provincial and Other Papers* (1906).

Norman Rowland Gale, b. 1862.

Mr. Norman Gale, like Dean Beeching, is one of those poets, more common in England than elsewhere, made by the traditions of public school and university life. Theirs is the poetry of scholarly grace and ordered leisure, sufficiently quickened from mere academicism by a vein of strong humanity. Like Herrick in another day, like T. E. Brown and Mr. Robert Bridges in this, Mr. Gale sings in scholarly verse the sweetness of meadows, lanes, hedgerows, thick-set plantations and purling streams; and mingling with poems of this kind are dainty love-lyrics in the manner and the metres of the Caroline poets. His best and most distinctive work is contained in the two series of *A Country Muse* (1892–93), *Orchard Songs* (1893), and the much later collection of *Song in September* (1912). His love-songs are more reminiscent of Herrick than of anybody else; in his fastidious use of the simplest words, in the delicate beauty of his rhythms, in the graceful nuance of his thought, he is nearer to Mr. Robert Bridges than to any other modern poet. He has no message, he is untroubled by the problems of the day, its theologies, class conflicts and party struggles. He finds all of life that he needs in the limits of a garden, a few square miles of the English country-side, and, it may be added, a playing field, for during several years Mr. Gale was a schoolmaster. In the simple, strong, sweet and enduring things he finds happiness and the inspiration of his poetry.

> "I am content to know that God is great,
> The Lord of fish and fowl, of air and sea—
> Some little points are misty. Let them wait."

Mr. Gale attempts nothing new, he is content to follow the tradition of English song-writers of the best period;

his country scenes and country folk are idealised, even more idealised than Herrick's, for he has none of Herrick's interest in custom and folk-lore. In the love-lyrics the conventional words are repeated a hundred times—white, snow, breast, lace, hose, garters—and he can be as frank as need reasonably be expected of a nineteenth century Herrick. But his is the frankness of literary artifice, not of realism, and the critics who drew forth his 'Defense,' in the volume of *Orchard Songs*, must have been unworthy the honour done them.

Song in September bears unmistakable traces of middle-age reflectiveness; many of the poems are more serious in intention, more loaded with thought than the simple pastoral verses Mr. Gale wrote as a young man. A note of melancholy intrudes, and in 'The Cherry of Lucullus' he arraigns his country in the spirit of Sir William Watson. In these poems there is less of the Caroline influence and more of the modern spirit. An interval of nearly twenty years separates *Orchard Songs* from *Song in September*. In these years he published verses, for the most part humorous, on the game of cricket—*Cricket Songs* (1894) and *More Cricket Songs* (1905)—verses for children and short idylls in prose, notably *A June Romance* (1894). A break of so many years, chiefly surrendered to *jeux d'esprit*, is curious in a poet of unquestionable lyric charm and genius. In the end, however, Mr. Gale came back to his own, to pastoral poetry, not a whit less beautiful, if a little more serious and grave than his first. His best work is to be found in the three early volumes and the last, which contain a poetry of true inspiration, if a little limited in appeal and charm.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, b. 1863.

The change is necessarily abrupt when we turn from the reflective, meditative and mystic poets just named to two writers of romantic ballads, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and Sir Henry Newbolt. The verse of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has been forced into a secondary place by his prose fiction, but he has written a small quantity of spirited poetry. He early showed his literary gift in the facility with which he caught the manner of other men in *Verses and Parodies* (1893). The 'Anecdote for Fathers' is much better

parody of Wordsworth than the famous example in *Rejected Addresses*, and the travesties of Whitman and Browning only suffer from being too short. As a writer of more serious verse Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has published two volumes in twenty years, *Poems and Ballads* (1896) and *The Vigil of Venus and Other Poems* (1912). The longest piece in *Poems and Ballads*, a blank-verse monologue, 'Columbus at Seville,' is simpler and more vigorous than Tennyson's dramatic monologue representing Columbus in old age and misfortune. But better still are the ballads—'The Comrade,' 'The Masquer in the Street' and 'Sabina.' In these the author seizes admirably the lilt and rhythm of ballad measure. The most important poem in *The Vigil of Venus* is a free translation of the *Pervigilium Veneris*, in which Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has succeeded in writing a fine poem, save that he suggests too strongly the melody and diction of Swinburne. In nearly all his ballads and lyrics a spring of true poetry rises, and when inspiration is weak its place is partly supplied by the admirable literary gift the author possesses. In whatever he touches he is never awkward, he never fails of a certain charm in manner.

Sir Henry Newbolt has the fortune to be a popular poet, and his poetry betrays the limitations of all popular poetry—it is never poetical in a high sense.

Sir Henry John Newbolt, b. 1862.

After long years of practice at the Bar he opened his literary career with a prose story and followed it with a blank-verse drama, *Mordred* (1895), written in good but exceedingly Tennysonian verse. Tennyson degraded the Arthurian legends to picturesque sentiment; and it will be some time before any poet can restore to life the Arthurian cycle of stories. William Morris and Matthew Arnold are only successful in short passages; Swinburne alone, in the passionate sweep and magnificent heroic measure of *Tristram of Lyonesse*, successfully defied the Tennysonian influence. Sir Henry Newbolt's *Mordred* is frankly imitative, and its characterisation is weak. It was with the stirring sea-songs of *Admirals All* (1897) that he deservedly won reputation. *Admirals All* contained twelve short poems. It was followed by *The Island Race* (1898), which added twenty-eight pieces. Even to-day all his

verse may be printed in a single volume of moderate size. Like Mr. Kipling he is the singer of England's mission of imperialism; but he has more historical sense than Mr. Kipling and more often finds his subjects in the past of English naval story. His temper is breezy and free, he delights in manhood, youth and courage, he is untroubled by the morbid introspectiveness of the age, and when he chooses the *rôle* of the prophet it is to exhort England to remember her heaven-sent mission to conquer and thereby bless that part of the earth which is still unhappy in its freedom from British rule. His poems are stirring, dramatic, vivid, written with a good swing rather than with careful versification. In 'The Ballad of John Nicholson' he is on Mr. Kipling's ground, India, and in no short ballad has Mr. Kipling succeeded in this way in catching the spirit of the epic: on the other hand Sir Henry Newbolt never comes within measurable distance of the poetical intensity of 'Mandalay.' Among other early poems the truly splendid 'Væ Victis' departs from merely ballad form and approaches the manner of great poetry. But had the other poems of the little volume been of this kind it would hardly have caught the popular fancy as it did. The one ringing and unforgettable ballad is 'Drake's Drum':

"Drake he was a Devon man, an' sailed the Devon seas,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.

"Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago."

In *The Sailing of the Longships* (1902) and *Songs of Memory and Hope* (1909) his inspiration grows weaker. In many poems of the first volume he is moved, with Henley and Mr. Kipling, to sing individual acts of courage which went some way to redeem our initial failures in South Africa. But none of these verses has the same ring as the earlier sea-songs. Far better are the fine 'Commemoration,' and 'Sráhmandázi,' the

ballad of an African bride who chose rather than life to accompany her lord through the gates of death. In *Songs of Memory and Hope* Sir Henry Newbolt became imitative and even a little dull. The breeziness has almost gone; and the poems are commonplace both in thought and expression. It is masculine and common-sense writing, but scarcely poetry; for he exhausted all that he felt and all that he had to say, with one or two exceptions, in the early sea-songs. It is true that in the six new ditties which open the volume of *Poems New and Old* (1912), especially in the 'Song of the Sou' Wester,' he seems to catch a little of the old spirit, but in a manner imitative of his earlier self. Sir Henry Newbolt is breezy, patriotic, warm-hearted, his poetry is animated by high ideals and a sense of good form in life; but the content is thin, the imaginative element scarcely exists, and he has little metrical faculty beyond an ear for racy and vigorous lilting in words. He has written a few excellent songs and ballads, but the finer breath of passionate and intense poetry, quickened by emotion strong and heart-felt, he has never felt.

§ 3

It is a good rule, worthy of acceptation, never to write upon living authors, unless it be recognised that this is but a means of study and inquiry, not a dogmatic assignation of values. It is only with diffidence we can attempt to define and characterise the work of writers who may yet have many active years before them. And in this section of the present chapter mention is made, so far as possible, only of poetry published within this century. New names constantly appear, some to remain, many to disappear in a few months or years. The reason of this differentiation is not always apparent to us: we are reading with our eyes too close to the book to see the print distinctly. The task of selection from the unending stream of printed verse can only be undertaken in a temper of hesitation qualified by the knowledge that judgments have their value relatively to us, though forty years hence they may seem blind and groping estimates. In all ages true poetry is the same, but its value is con-

ditioned by time and place, and the universal poet, whom time cannot wither, has seldom been born. But poetry is always poetry; the distinction between major and minor poetry is a fallacy of the Philistines. Poetry and verse, it is true, are two different things, and the most of men who attempt to write poetry only write verse. But many of lesser note have written a poem or two which would always be quoted if contained in the standard editions of Goethe or Shelley. The difference between the greater and the lesser poet is a matter of quantity; the former writes more poetry and less verse in proportion to his total output. But a poem is always a poem by whomsoever written. Sir William Watson and others have cavilled at the distinction between major and minor poets: but the distinction is entirely to be justified. The major poet writes more poetry and less verse: that is all. It is the drawing of a distinction between major and minor poetry which involves confusion in thought. Yet the best of critics may be ludicrously mistaken in reading contemporary poetry. Perhaps it is true that the poetry meant for all time is not so clearly poetry for the men of an age, for its value is unconditioned and the critic's outlook is conditioned by his environment. And, therefore, while verse will not often appear as poetry, great poetry may often appear as incompetent blundering in the critic's eyes. But, on the whole, what is bad will soon reveal itself to the unprejudiced observer. If some good poetry must at first pass unrecognised for what it is, this is only a temporary evil, for probably Mr. George Moore is justified in his optimistic faith that no true poem can be finally lost. If we can only read with defective and short sight the poetry that is being made to-day, we have, at least, some advantage over those who after us read with clearer insight. *We* can never read *Hamlet* as the man who first read it in its earliest printed form, although he knew little of Shakespeare's greatness and we much.

It is, therefore, better to read contemporary verse for the joy and inspiration it may afford us individually, untroubled by any desire to speak or write of it. But the blind adventure often brings its reward, and a greater than we hoped. In any case, as we are here chiefly concerned

with poets who only recently began to publish and still write, it will be well to name first one already dead, whose first book of verse appeared fourteen years since. To the wider public Henry Dawson Lowry was little known at any time, and during his life almost entirely as a writer of prose. The sum of his work is small—a novel, several collections of short stories, two slender volumes of poetry and a child's book.

Henry Dawson Lowry, 1869–1906.

He died young; but as a journalist and story-writer he was at work for at least seventeen or eighteen years, and the smallness of his output is evidence of his fastidious temper. And, further, journalism pursued for a livelihood filled a large part of his working hours. At the age of twenty-one he began to contribute to the *National Observer*, and soon became one of that distinguished band Henley gathered about him. When the *National Observer* came to an end he contributed to various papers, and finally, in 1897, he joined the literary staff of the *Morning Post*. In his lifetime he only published one volume of poetry, *The Hundred Windows* (1904). A posthumous collection of inferior verse, *A Dream of Daffodils*, appeared in 1912. Many of the poems in the first volume are inspired by a love of Cornwall, of the brooding peace, silent hills and green valleys of the West Country. In all his poems is revealed the temper of a singularly gentle and beautiful mind, melancholy in its moods and naturally attuned to the colourless skies and landscapes of Cornwall. He writes:

> "And you, who love me, if you would know me
> Come away to the Western sea,
> The land that did make shall take and show me
> Better than that I have seemed to be."

The strongest as well as the most beautiful poems of the volume are 'Art in Life' and 'Art and Life.' By his admirers he has been compared to Keats and Heine. But these comparisons profit little. He has nothing of Heine's wayward strength, nothing of Keats's wealth of language and picturesque decorativeness. His poetry has little strength, but much beauty: it is never careless, never loud; it reflects a mind, quiet, reserved, brooding.

For Lowry poetry was an escape from the vulgar battle of life to those thoughts and dreams that were lovelier than all experience.

Of poets still quite young one of the most widely read and known is Mr. Alfred Noyes. His poetry has the happy fortune to be saleable. And in 1913 when he encouraged his popularity by lecturing in America he was hailed as the greatest poet since Tennyson. A few years have still to pass before Mr. Noyes will be forty, and he began to publish poetry only sixteen years ago. Contemporary popularity may or may not have its moral. In the case of Mr. Noyes it clearly has; for his imagination never passes outside the range of ordinary men's understanding, he appeals to the common intelligence by the prettiness or heroics of his verse, and the obvious, sing-song music of his lines has charms for the least-trained ear. Further, the ideas he embodies in poems of a religious nature, such as 'De Profundis' and 'The Paradox,' are those commonly accepted by the majority of English readers. He always steers a course widely distant from the innermost heart of man, that greatest of all things; and he is, therefore, never revolutionary, never disturbing. Mr. Noyes' facile readiness in the use of a pictorial language does not suffice to make true poetry of a world which he conceives largely as a well-stocked and glittering bazaar.

Alfred Noyes, b. 1880.

He is a rapid writer. In four years he produced four volumes—two miscellaneous collections, *The Loom of Years* (1902) and *Poems* (1904), and two long fairy-tale poems, *The Flower of Old Japan* (1903) and *The Forest of Wild Thyme* (1905). The first of these volumes is accomplished, the verse is pretty, but there is little that is distinctive or strong. 'The Lotus of Wisdom' is not without fine imagery; the 'Love-song of Moina' avoids the hammered accents so common with Mr. Noyes; 'An Æsthete' has a more direct force than is generally to be found in his writing; but the finest poem of the volume is the blank-verse narrative of 'Michael Oaktree,' a poem which won the praise of George Meredith. It is plain, severe, free from superfluous ornament, and reaches the heart in the restrained and dignified pathos with which

it tells of an old cottager's quiet death. And the poem contains one impressive image, Hebraic in its breadth and simplicity—

> "Then Michael Oaktree took his wife's thin hand
> Between his big rough hands and held it. There
> It lay like a tired ewe, between two crags,
> Sheltered from all the winds."

The fault of the volume and of the second miscellaneous collection is the monotonous and commonplace music of the lines. There are poems as bad in this respect as the worst in church hymnals. 'Sea Foam,' for example, is grotesquely like a well-known hymn. 'The Barrel Organ' is symbolic of its subject; it is verse ground out by the turning of a handle. Lilting sing-song is Mr. Noyes' snare. And he continually glides into a poetry of cloying sweetness or the prettiness of Dresden china ornament. These lapses make it difficult to read him with any constant pleasure, although he can write poems of real power, which manifest his instinctive responsiveness to the beauty of the world, his love of colour and a faculty, on occasion, for writing metrically without dropping into obvious lilts. The blank verse 'Night on St. Helena' is a poem of distinction; 'The Old Sceptic' and 'Lessons' are humanly sincere; among more philosophic poems 'The Fisher-girl' is a strong piece of writing; 'Silk o' the Kine' and 'Sherwood' are poems of true and unaffected beauty.

But in his early work nothing is so indicative of the bent of Mr. Noyes' poetic faculty as the two fairy tales in verse, *The Flower of Old Japan* and *The Forest of Wild Thyme*. In the former, especially, Mr. Noyes has created something fresh and entirely pleasing in this weaving of a bizarre, grotesque, pretty and fanciful fairy allegory from the willow-pattern. His naïve and not very subtle melodies are here perfectly in place, in a bazaar-like world of dainty things—ivories, fans, gorgeously plumaged birds, bright-sailed ships, glancing seas and gleaming clouds. Even Mr. W. W. Gibson in his early poems does not paint so brightly as this, for Mr. Noyes outvies the extravagant painting of Browning in *Sordello*. It may be said of these early volumes that they are sane, healthy,

and, within circumscribed limits, imaginative and glowing with colour, but they rarely reach the clearer and greater poetry of 'Michael Oaktree.'

After these trials of his pen Mr. Noyes essayed the ambitious task of writing an English epic in twelve books of blank verse. And in a region far different from the pretty and decorative poetry of the fairy tales he won undoubted success. The merit of *Drake* (1906–8) is not single: the blank verse is handled with narrative power which immediately raises it above much of his rhymed verse; the drama of England's sea-story in the days of Elizabeth is made to move in vivid pageantry before our eyes; and the "wind-darkened sea" is conceived with epic breadth as a spirit of destiny brooding over the action of the poem. It may be added, and this is no disparagement, that read merely as a story the poem is interesting. In his *Dawn in Britain* Mr. Doughty attempted to write in large outline an epic of our island story, and he has communicated to his poem an atmosphere of the dim and the mysterious more impressive than the silvern lucidity of *Drake*. But whereas Mr. Doughty is barely readable Mr. Noyes carries the reader with him. If occasionally the verse rings like thin beaten metal, it is for the greater part, at least, adequate to its subject; and it rises occasionally to passages of imaginative splendour or passionate intensity.

The contents of *Forty Singing Seamen* (1907) and *The Enchanted Island* (1909) are not in any striking characteristics distinguished from the *Poems* of 1904—there is the same command of words, the same love of colour and ornament, the same absence of the sudden surprises of greater poetry, the same easy lyrical faculty. *The Enchanted Island* contains a few poems—'In a Railway Carriage' and 'The Newspaper Boy' among them—which show that Mr. Noyes is following the leading of the time toward a realistic limning of common life in verse. 'The Admiral's Ghost' reminds us of Sir Henry Newbolt, and is quite as good; and the lines 'On the Death of Francis Thompson' have caught something of the remoteness of utterance and mystic fervour of the poet they celebrate. The title-poem of *Forty Singing Seamen*, a rollicking and humorous ballad, is one of the best and

strongest things Mr. Noyes has written; but in 'Orpheus and Eurydice' and other poems he becomes merely fluent and verbose; and the patriotic songs of the volume have no distinction. In *The Wine Press: A Tale of War* (1913) poetry is shouldered aside by rhetoric and exaggerated declamation. The fighting in the Balkans laid upon Mr. Noyes the burden of the prophet denouncing war. He is passionately sincere in uttering his message; he heaps in disorderly congestion gruesome details and horrifying scenes; he breaks out in unbalanced tirades upon the giant evil of war; he forgets that restraint, not fanaticism, is power. Like Mr. Masefield in poems of another kind he can lose himself in a whirl of meaningless violence.

But *The Wine Press* is an eccentricity on the part of Mr. Noyes. As a poet he follows, without any strong admixture of personality, the main tradition of English poetry. There is little that is individual in his writing: he has nothing of Mr. Symons' subtlety, or the impressive simplicity of Mr. Hardy, or the passionate strength of John Davidson. These three names, to mention no others, stand for definite aims, ideals and methods of self-expression. Mr. Noyes is always sanely beautiful, he uses a large vocabulary with fluent readiness, he has a true but not fine gift of song, marred by careless and undistinguished use of metre. Like Tennyson he is always readable, but not often stimulating. Nevertheless, it is a tribute to Mr. Noyes' powers to be compelled to confess that he is a true poet in forms so widely dissevered as that fairy allegory, fragrant with the perfume of roses and tea gardens, *The Flower of Old Japan*, and the finely versified epic drama of *Drake*.

T. Sturge Moore, b. 1870.

Two parallelisms may be discovered between Mr. Sturge Moore and Mr. Noyes in that each writes with unresting and commendable rapidity and in each the ear fails to detect the more subtle cadences of word-music. In other respects, in choice of classic theme and the use of irregular measures, it is natural to compare Mr. Sturge Moore to Mr. Hewlett; but he has not yet given us in melody and colouring any reading of classic legend as beautiful or significant as *The Agonists*. Mr. Sturge Moore has won reputation both as a poet and a

critic of art. As a poet he began by publishing a small volume of miscellaneous verse, *The Vine-dresser and Other Poems* (1899). His succeeding volumes may be divided into poetic drama (for reading, not representation), including *Aphrodite Against Artemis* (1901), *Absolom* (1903), and *Mariamne* (1911); dialogue poems—*The Centaur's Booty* (1903), *The Rout of the Amazons* (1903) and *Pan's Prophecy* (1904); several small collections of lyric verse—*The Gazelles and Other Poems* (1904), *To Leda and Other Odes* (1904), *Theseus, Medea and Lyrics* (1904); and a long lyric, *Danaë* (1903). In none of these does Mr. Sturge Moore sink beneath a high level of literary accomplishment, he never becomes commonplace, but equally he fails, in general, to reach the plane of pure poetry. The dramatic poems are written in blank verse or in irregular unrhymed metres, and in no case does he acquit himself as a prosodist of distinction. Not a little of his blank verse is hammered out in a long series of end-stopt lines. In this respect *Mariamne* is no better than the early poems, indeed perhaps worse. It is difficult to read continuously and with pleasure verse like—

> "Not in kings' houses is it hard to find
> False witnesses, when one can seek with gold;
> Nor are those high in honour envied least;
> Nor does a woman's hatred take a sword,—
> The tongue that sows dissensions she prefers.
> Think how thyself stood in like peril once
> Of Cleopatra's most offending tongue!"

This is wanting in ear and skill, and the passage may often be matched in Mr. Moore's blank verse. It makes the plays monotonous reading. He is more at home in irregular forms of unrhymed verse. These he can write with swiftness, passion and fervour, as witness the speeches of Phædra and Theseus in *Aphrodite Against Artemis*. Of his longer poems, however, by far the most beautiful in thought, imagery and expression is the allegorical *Pan's Prophecy*, which interprets in dialogue between Pan and Psyche the late-born classic myths of the soul.

His shorter lyrics do not display any strongly-marked and individual features. His earliest volume, *The Vine-dresser*, has a few poems that linger in the memory—

'Tempio di Venere' with its clear observation and forcible rendering of a scene, 'Judith' with its sustained intensity, and 'The Sibyl.' Some of Mr. Moore's experiments in verse are uncalled for and unfortunate. The attempt to render a metrical version of the lament of David over Saul and Jonathan with close fidelity to the words of the English Bible may interest the author, but the ordinary reader only gains from it a strengthened belief in the inspiration of King James's translators. Mr. Sturge Moore is an academic and literary poet. He is never closely in touch with the life of a real world. As exercises in verse drawing upon the author's knowledge of classic myth the poems doubtless have a personal meaning, but few are likely to tempt the reader a second time. From this statement one wise and beautiful poem, *Pan's Prophecy*, must be excluded.

Hilaire Belloc, b. 1870.

As a poet Mr. Sturge Moore writes to please himself without thought of readers; he is untouched by any moods or phases of poetry in his time, and deserts his environment for realms of legend and myth where he may write poetry *in vacuo*. Save for a certain affinity to the writing of Mr. Maurice Hewlett his work bears little family likeness to the aims and ideals of other poets of to-day; and it is therefore possible to turn from him to write of two journalistic poets, Mr. Hilaire Belloc and Mr. G. K. Chesterton, without attempting any sequence in ideas. Readers acquainted only with the later Mr. Belloc, whom we have come to know in the twentieth century, will meet with surprises in opening the curious little volume of *Verses and Sonnets* (1895) printed on thick cardboard. Three diminutive lyrics of no importance open the book, eight insignificant sonnets in Shakespearean and other forms follow, and only then do we reach the section named (without reason for the most part) 'Grotesques,' in which first we meet with that nimbleness of wit and fancy, that charm and distinction in the use of English associated with Mr. Belloc's later prose and verse. But no volume as a whole could promise less than this, save in the humour of the 'Grotesques,' a humour which has since been put to better use in books of verse for children.

Fifteen years elapsed before Mr. Belloc published *Verses* (1910), another small collection of miscellaneous poems. The humorous and satirical verse is good, but the greater part of this volume would scarcely justify us in speaking of Mr. Belloc as a poet: it is only when inspired by his two great themes, Sussex and beer, that he reaches a higher level. There are here three fine drinking songs; but in two poems, 'Stanzas Written on Battersea Bridge' and 'The South Country,' he far surpasses anything else he has printed in verse. 'The South Country' has all the artlessness and pictorial effect gained by simplest means belonging to the true ballad. It is an infinite pity that Mr. Belloc has not found it in him to give us more poems like this. For in it he reaches in verse the poetic romanticism, the naïve inconsequence which lend so great a delight and charm to the prose of *The Path to Rome* and *The Four Men*. In 'The South Country' there is the true ingenuousness of poetry, a use of simple and good English, a clear eye for effects and contrasts, and an arrestive melody which mark Mr. Belloc as capable of better poetry than any he has yet written.

G. K. Chesterton, b. 1874.

In many points Mr. Belloc and Mr. G. K. Chesterton are the natural complement of each other—journalists, democrats, optimists, prophets to their age, confident and untiring in asserting the traditional faith, Roman in the one case, Anglican in the other. Mr. Belloc, however, has the finer literary sense, a charm of exquisite style, and he avoids the affectations and poses of Mr. Chesterton. To the majority of thoughtless readers the latter is known as a brilliant journalist who executes upon the carpet amazing contortions in paradox, as an essayist upon all and nothing and as a writer of fantastic novels. His mechanical production of paradox by restating any ordinary truism upside down is stimulating for a time, but it grows a dreary habit with frequent iteration. Yet it would be idle to deny him a genius for ideas; and in his better mood as a critic of literature he possesses an acuteness and clearness of insight shared by few. He has written an admirable critical monograph on Browning, an introduction to a book of selections from Thackeray which contains some of the best observations ever made

on the greatest of Victorian novelists, a small book on Victorian literature which illuminates the work of individual writers if it gives little idea of the period as a whole, and he has championed Dickens against the disparagements of an age which discountenances imagination in favour of industrious observation. And, further, Mr. Chesterton is a *poet:* his highest literary achievement is his *Ballad of the White Horse.*

But eleven years earlier he published a volume of individual and characteristic verse, *The Wild Knight and Other Poems* (1900). Here are ideas and original ideas, paradoxes, a message, optimism and a masculine faith in the goodness of being alive. The men of the 'nineties were aweary of this great world; Mr. Chesterton suffers from no megrims of disillusion. Typical of his philosophy of life are the words of his noble tribute to Gladstone:

> "If we must say, 'No more his peer
> Cometh; the flag is furled.'
> Stand not too near him, lest he hear
> That slander on the world."

'The Wild Knight,' the longest poem of the volume, after opening with a passage of fine imaginative poetry, subsides into confused allegorical dialogue. Save for its opening lines it is inferior to many of the shorter poems. In common with them it teaches that God's in His heaven and all's right with the world. But a poem that stirs and starts the blood in the veins is the splendidly grotesque soliloquy of 'The Donkey.'

> "The tattered outlaw of the earth,
> Of ancient crooked will;
> Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
> I keep my secret still.
>
> "Fools! For I also had my hour;
> One far fierce hour and sweet:
> There was a shout about my ears,
> And palms before my feet."

This is the poetry of inspiration. Nevertheless, little in the early volume can compare with *The Ballad of the White Horse* (1911), a long poem written with a genius for catching the spirited adventurousness of the folk-

ballad, and only marred by the intrusive didacticism with which Mr. Chesterton preaches the faith that is in him —the blessing of Christianity and the nihilism of the pagan, the ancient equivalent of the modern agnostic. The story of the ballad is King Alfred's deliverance of the land from the Norseman; but, despite his victory, the King predicts a time when the heathen shall come back, not in the guise of manly and savage barbarians, but mild and shaven "ordering all things with dead words," breaking the heart and hope of the world, ruining and making dark. For it is the faith of Mr. Chesterton that—

> "The men of the East may spell the stars,
> And times and triumphs mark,
> But the men signed of the cross of Christ
> Go gaily in the dark."

To Mr. Chesterton, as to other men of letters in this day of doctrinal literature, must be allowed his gospel of salvation. *The Ballad of the White Horse* is not, however, a mere allegory of the conquest of weary agnosticism by joyous Christianity; it would remain a ringing and stirring poem were its message omitted. Mr. Chesterton essays no elaborate archaic artifices, no hypertrophied devices of melody; he does not throughout cling to the same measure, but in the swing and spirit of the poem he has without labour won the manner of the true ballad. It is as spontaneous and unforced as one of Scott's lays. The style is simple and of few words, the narrative almost rollicks on its way; but, again like Scott, Mr. Chesterton has imbued his high-spirited ballad with the atmosphere of a national epic. It is one of the few long narrative poems of the last two decades which can be read a second time. It contains hardly any subtleties or abstract images, and this is well, for Mr. Chesterton, when he forgets his message, remembers that he is writing a narrative poem on an historical subject. And it has pre-eminently in its narrative the fine objective manner of the old ballad and carol, a virtue almost lost to the mind of an introspective age.

The poets of man are born more often than the true and simple poets of nature. Nearly every rhymester makes his first essays with descriptions of skies, hills,

woodlands and meadows, but like Whitman he discovers the difficulty of omitting the "stock poetical touches," and a great part of nature poetry resolves itself into a fresh arrangement of well-worn phrases and lines. Loving observation of nature and constant intercourse with her will not suffice to create poetry. Wordsworth was a great poet of nature not because he loved her more passionately than others, but because he was more often stirred to high feeling. He would have been a poet had circumstance bound him all his life to a mean street in London, although he would have chosen other subjects than were suggested to him by the Lake Country. To few belongs the gift of deep and simple sincerity in feeling, without which nature poetry can be no more than an iteration of thoughts already better conceived and more strongly expressed. Dean Beeching and Mr. A. C. Benson find joy in the peaceful seclusion of gardens and the spring beauty of country lanes. They express their thought in creditable verse, but the swift and sudden illumination that comes of an emotion heartfelt and grounded deep in life rarely if ever visits them. In Mr. Norman Gale we are often conscious of an emotion that is unsought and discovers itself in sincere poetry; and more often are we conscious of this in Mr. A. E. Housman's *Shropshire Lad*, which contains some of the noblest and simplest nature poetry in English. And to these names may now be added those of two sincere and individual poets of nature who began to write but a few years since. The rare beauty of the poetry of Mr. Alfred Williams and Mr. W. H. Davies is a cause of astonishment when we learn the story of their early lives. They are both born of the people, they have both passed through years of poverty and hard struggle, and neither has been embittered by the past or lost the gracious sense of joy in living.

Alfred Williams, b. 1877.

Mr. Alfred Williams became a farm-boy at eleven and at fourteen a rivet-lad in the railway works at Swindon. At twenty he began to read and by incessant work, early in the morning and late at night, he succeeded not only in gaining a good knowledge of English poetry but in teaching himself to read Latin, Greek and French. His first verses to see the light were printed in

a miscellaneous anthology, and then in 1909 he published *Songs in Wiltshire*. This was followed by *Poems in Wiltshire* (1911) and *Nature and Other Poems* (1912). Mr. Williams, although his sympathy is with the simple daily round of the ploughman and the village wife, though life on the soil is for him the ideal of existence, is too deeply steeped in literature to be a poet of the people, writing in their dialect like a Barnes or a Burns. Probably he would never have written poetry had he not been inspired by the love of books and set himself, at immense cost, to acquire culture. And the range of his knowledge is not bounded by matters purely literary. In his delightful prose book, *A Wiltshire Village* (1912), he shows an intimate acquaintance with the geological history of the county he loves, its present life, its streams, hills, flora and the fishes caught in any particular reach of the rivers. His knowledge and his powers of observation are individual and peculiar to himself; his passion for the open air is as sincere as Whitman's; it is not the pose of the poet who, never leaving his study, sings the joy of the winding road and the lone sea beach. Echoes of Shelley, Meredith, Whitman are not wanting in Mr. Williams' poetry; but he utters as his own the thoughts that have stirred us before. All his writing is strong, simple, sane; it has no affectations and betrays none of the assertive arrogance or crudities so often to be found in the self-educated man. The frank and unassuming naturalness of expression in these poems is one of their high merits. The 'Wiltshire Song,' 'The Blackbird's Canticle,' 'A Woman's Face,' the 'Rustic Song' and 'On the Downs' are all outstanding poems; but in joy of song none surpasses 'In the Meadow.' When Mr. Williams writes—

> "Let the round world shoot and pass
> With its sorrow and its sin,
> Like a shattered globe of glass
> And the latter fear begin;
> For ever, ever, ever,
> As the crimson-flowing wine,
> Thou wilt blossom, O my soul!
> With the rose and eglantine."

he may be thinking of Shelley, perhaps of Davidson, and the analogy of the "crimson-flowing wine" has no relation

to the imagery of the stanza ; but there is something here that rises from the very sources of poetry.

The power and beauty of Mr. Williams' thought grow, and with his practice in self-expression he learns to avoid some of the crudities inevitable at the first. But the second and third volumes are chiefly remarkable for their deeper content and clearer reflection of the poet's personality. ' Natural Thoughts and Surmises ' in the earlier volume and ' The Testament ' in the second are the most intimate and complete confession of his close communion with nature. In sincerity, fidelity of observation, in the felicitous use of words and in largeness of outline these poems are noteworthy. The rough and unrhymed verse in which they are written fetches its being from *Leaves of Grass*, but Mr. Williams writes it in his own way with greater regularity and more restraint than Whitman. And he has no need to eschew rhyme on account of its difficulties, for he can write lyrics in the familiar measures beautifully and melodiously. He has the vision of the poet, he can express himself in words and thoughts which are none the less his own because they are sometimes coloured by his knowledge of the literature of several languages ; and in these poems we never lose our touch with the simple, sincere and self-contained personality of the author. His inspiration is far from unfailing, but he rarely writes as ineffectively as he does in ' Julia and Margaret.' In the majority of these poems restraint and unassuming truthfulness are united to a very real gift of song. Mr. Williams' writing is arresting, it has the note of personal reflection and personal utterance, despite the many traces of literary influence. He is one among the few true poets of nature.

William H. Davies, b. 1870.

It needs only that a bath-chair man or a sempstress should write a book and succeed in bringing it into notice and the world will read avidly, surprised that the book should be written at all. The extravagant praise which greeted Mr. W. H. Davies on the appearance of his first book, *The Soul's Destroyer* (1907), was due less to the merit of his poetry than the interest of his story, which had spread abroad. After years spent as a tramp in America he lost one foot in an

accident and came back to England to quarter himself in doss-houses and write poetry. Mr. Davies' story was romantic; but this did not justify foolish over-praise of his verse. He was compared to James Thomson (B.V.), Crabbe, Wordsworth, the Elizabethans, and described as "a lord of language." Comment is needless. In his first collection those poems of the doss-house, 'Saints and Lodgers' and the reverie, 'The Lodging-house Fire' contain good writing, but the blank verse 'Soul's Destroyer' is metrically monotonous, and, beyond betraying a genuine feeling for natural beauty, it has small vestige of the stronger emotion of poetry. And vulgarisms—for example the poet's notice of the bird that "twittered some"—which can never be made into poetry are unpardonable even in a tramp-poet. The one poem of distinction in this volume is 'The Lodging-house Fire.' The stanza—

> "No man lives life so wise
> But unto Time he throws
> Morsels to hunger for
> At his life's close,"

is an astonishing example of concentration in thought and expression. In *New Poems* (1907) and *Nature Poems* (1908) he uses to far better purpose the two faculties that chiefly are his—a vision of beauty and happiness in life and nature as clear and direct as the child's and an unfailing strain of effortless song. Nearly all his poems are fresh, springing from a mind which sees the world not as others see, but individually. Women and children, bird-song and sunset, ale and the vagrant life, the characters of doss-house and slum—of these he sings for the joy and interest of seeing and feeling. And he wisely forswears cumbering his poetry with intellectualisms. There is nothing sophisticated in his thought or style. In restrained simplicity he is sometimes not far from Wordsworth, in the fleeting beauty of his word-music not unlike Herrick. And the next two volumes, *Farewell to Poesy* (1910) and *Songs of Joy* (1911), exhibit even greater gain in melody and felicitous simplicity. Perhaps in *Foliage* (1913) he sings a little less spontaneously of the themes from which he rarely departs, but his poems

retain their charm of artless grace in imagery and style. Mr. Davies' genius as a poet is limited; he has neither the strength nor intellectual force of Mr. Williams, nor can he successfully embark on a long poem. He has no message, no strong thought for his generation. He is content if he may sing in his own words the changeless and simple facts of life and nature, and he rarely fails to render these sincerely and with a clear music.

John Drinkwater, b. 1882.

If the genius of Mr. W. H. Davies is spontaneously lyrical Mr. John Drinkwater is to be counted with the elegiac poets, and he sometimes reminds us of Sir William Watson. His verse is intellectual and meditative. His later writing impresses us with a consciousness of contact with a strong and thoughtful nature, and it is, therefore, surprising to discover the poverty of his first efforts in poetry. *Poems* (1903) contains wholly unoriginal verse written in simple metres, and is often mildly pious in thought. In *The Death of Leander* (1906) Mr. Drinkwater is more articulate; but the volume holds nothing to arrest the reader's attention. Some of the shorter poems treat, in a quite conventional manner, the modern man's religious difficulties. There is little tunefulness in either of these collections. But with the volume of *Lyrical and Other Poems* (1908) Mr. Drinkwater showed a great advance in melody, command of thought and language. The two earlier volumes were utterly uninteresting, of the third the last thing that could be said is that the writing is commonplace or comes from a common mind. The address to 'Shakespeare' is a noble ode, the 'June Dance' is worthy the beautiful month it celebrates, and the sonnets, 'Supplication' and 'Edinburgh,' are evidence that Mr. Drinkwater has been studying the technique of poetry to good purpose. In the two succeeding volumes, not very appositely named *Poems of Men and Hours* (1911) and *Poems of Love and Earth* (1912), the growth of his power is proportionately maintained. The opening 'Prayer' of the first of these two volumes is an impressive poem both in breadth of composition and grave dignity of utterance. Here we find beyond mistake the earnest and high emotion of poetry—

> "Knowledge we ask not—knowledge Thou hast lent,
> But, Lord, the will—there lies our bitter need,
> Give us to build above the deep intent
> The deed, the deed."

'For They Have Need,' and indeed nearly all the other poems of the volume are informed with the same gravity and earnestness. And the observation applies with almost equal truth to *Poems of Love and Earth*, save for a few high-spirited and happy-hearted poems like 'The Vagabond' and the inconsequent 'Feckenham Men.' In 'The Fires of God' he returns to the long philosophic poem with far greater success than in his first attempts; and the brief elegy to Tolstoy is only brought short of success by its brevity. In his *Cromwell and Other Poems* (1913) the sequence of poems in varied metres entitled 'Cromwell' witnesses to Mr. Drinkwater's command of a finely chosen vocabulary, but his lines are stiff and pedantic, and in seeking to reach an epic largeness he has in a great measure missed the sources of poetry. Several of the shorter poems, and especially 'In Lady Street' and 'Travel Talk,' are more characteristic of his genius as a poet of restrained gravity and moral earnestness.

Mr. Drinkwater is less at his ease in lyric than in elegiac, meditative and hortatory verse. His lyrics have a grave intention which differentiates them from a flow of unpremeditated song. And he uses English with restraint and respect. He is never tempted to astonish with exuberance of language or plethora of imagery. He writes directly and always uses the most obvious and natural word for the expression of his thought. The bent of his temperament is to the ethical and intellectual, and neither imagination nor emotion carries him away. Although he betrays no intimate knowledge of classical poetry he is formal and classical by instinct. It is the failing of poets who write in the mood of elegy that after a few years intellect overpowers the emotions, talent replaces genius and inspiration is withdrawn. In his later volumes Mr. Drinkwater has reached a consistently high level of elegiac and rhetorical verse, but his attainment has been a little monotonously even. If he does not halt uncertainly nor lapse into the commonplace,

equally he is without the magic of a quickened inspiration.

Three poets to whom the gifts of lyricism, song and fancy in varying mood and form have been given, remain to be noted before the close of this section. The eldest of the three, Mr. Walter de la Mare, beginning later in life than the younger two, is still writing, whereas James Elroy Flecker and Rupert Brooke died within a few months of each other in 1915.

Walter de la Mare, b. 1873.

Mr. Walter de la Mare (Walter Ramal) when he began to publish his work in volume form was approaching the fourth decade of his life, but he is the singer of a young and romantic world, a singer even for children, understanding and perceiving as a child. In one sense the sum of his work is small and his province narrow; for he is least successful in what he may himself, at one time, have regarded as his more ambitious poems, in his laboured 'Characters from Shakespeare,' in the blank verse essays on 'Youth' and 'The Voice of Melancholy,' and (with some exception) in the sonnets. These belong to *Poems* (1906), which holds less that is born of the author's true genius than his other volumes, suggesting the result of an earnest will and intention to compose poetry on set themes rather than a poetry of the heart and mind. One or two pieces have a more personal note, but they are not sufficient in themselves to give an individuality to the collection. Two songs of the sea—of which Mr. Walter de la Mare never fails to write with the passion of a lover—'The Seas of England' and the sonnet, 'Sea-magic' and a few other verses are in his true manner; but, taken as a whole, *Poems* hardly ranks in the direct succession of his work.

Songs of Childhood (1902), a collection passing from nursery ditty through whimsical fancy to gay or tender lyric and song, is representative of the author's real genius; and in the same mode, with increasing charm and beauty, followed *The Listeners* (1912) and *Peacock Pie* (1913). Songs of the nursery and childhood, graceful fancies, the slightest of lyrics, unthinkingly happy or wistfully dreaming on things past and never to return, such is the content of these books. Grace and fleeting music

of words, sometimes like Shakespeare's songs of little meaning in themselves, are the true realm of Mr. Walter de la Mare's delicate fancy. And when he attempts nothing more than a tender conceit or a day-dream light as the sea-foam and bright as the sun on glancing water his genius never deserts him. The greater things he has fortunately learned to set aside in the two volumes last named, and, wisely limiting himself to his reach, he has shaped flawlessly his fairy songs and happy fancies. But, if grace and charm are his distinguishing characteristics, they are not the whole; in a few words, seemingly artless and unsought, he can express a pathos or a hope as wide as man's life. 'An Epitaph' is but eight lines in length, but greater poets have often said less in as many pages.

> "Here lies a most beautiful lady,
> Light of step and heart was she;
> I think she was the most beautiful lady
> That ever was in the West Country.
> But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
> However rare—rare it be;
> And when I crumble, who will remember
> This lady of the West Country?"

Further illustration, where so much is perfect within its intention, will serve no good purpose. In *The Listeners* may be read verses as varied as the pathos of 'Never More, Sailor' and 'The Stranger,' the bizarre fancifulness of 'The Scarecrow,' the moving sadness and beauty of 'All That's Past,' or the grace of 'The Three Cherry Trees.' And *Peacock Pie* has no page without a rare delight and charm, from the little ditties of 'Up and Down' to the beautiful nature poems of 'Earth and Air' and the closing 'Songs.'

Rupert Brooke, 1887–1915.

The poetry of Rupert Brooke is a poetry of youth and romance: not the romance of the distant, the bizarre, the remote, but the romance of the actual and its adventurous discovery. No characteristic of Brooke's poetry is more marked than its valiant and happy youthfulness, tinged not infrequently with that sceptical irony and half-affected cynicism not less indicative of the young man's uncertainty both of life and himself. The

young poet who, like Shelley, Keats, or, it may be added, Flecker, lives in the world of the transcendental and mythical is secured against his little knowledge of life; not so the shielded youth who affects to write of those things which can only be seen clearly and in perspective when life has ceased to be a venture at large. And, because of an affectation beyond the measure of the poet's wisdom and experience, Rupert Brooke's first volume is a fair promise rather than the fulfilment of intention. The manner of the undergraduate talking of the world he is about to enter is never far distant; and the poetry, with all its personal touches of wit and irony, remains derivative and experimental. In many poems he followed a contemporary tendency to a rough and cynical realism in verse. In this respect 'Jealousy' and several other pages of *Poems* (1911) may be compared to the work of Mr. James Stephens, although Brooke did not at this stage possess the originality in humour, philosophy of life and knowledge of human character belonging to Mr. Stephens. None of these poems, save for an interest in the author, will recall the reader a second time. More indicative of the true poet that was to be are the quasi-philosophical poems of this volume, which treat, if not always very intelligibly, with a manner that is personal and unaffected the mysteries of life and death. Brooke's first volume had, at least, the merit of unconventionality: and in his rough-hewn, sometimes whimsical poems he tried, not always successfully, to avoid manufacturing verses and express what he felt.

Three years and a few months of life were left to Rupert Brooke after the publication of this first volume of poetry, three years memorable in his brief story. In 1913 he was elected a fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and in the same year he left England to travel by the United States and Canada to the South Seas. To this journey we owe not only the prose *Letters from America* (1916) and the warm and sunlit poems of the South Seas, but, in some part at least, the whole difference between his writing before the end of 1911 and that day of April, 1915, when he laid down his young life for his country, not the less truly because his death was not in the open field. Other influences had also been at work—life in

London, and in the last months the outbreak of the great war—to make *1914 and Other Poems* (1915) a volume of English poetry not less rapturously youthful than the first, but wise also and grave. Even the old ironies have become tender and wistful, as witness the sonnet entitled 'Unfortunate' and the haunting 'Chilterns.' In melody and range of expression Brooke gained immeasurably in these years. 'Tiare Tahiti' and 'The Great Lover' have a music and a cadence which set them far above his early work: and, in another mode, the handling of the octosyllabic couplets of the spirited 'Old Vicarage: Grantchester' is admirable. The promise, not always certain, has been more than redeemed in this posthumous collection of poems, which is likely to endure with the best that has been written in recent years. Of Rupert Brooke it may be said that he not only added to, he enriched English poetry in his slender volume and English sonnets with the brief series inspired by the war. Of these sonnets one is both prophetic of his end and a character of the true poet and joyous lover of beauty.

"If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven."

James Elroy Flecker, 1884–1915.

James Elroy Flecker was peculiarly a poet of intellectualism, who regarded himself as standing for a classical reaction against the common tendencies of English poetry in his day. But the word classical, so far as it has any longer meaning as a literary label, allies his poetry not to the reasoned and elegiac forms of Matthew Arnold and Sir William Watson, but

to the deliberate craftsmanship in words of Keats or the French Parnassians, whom especially he eulogised and took to be his masters. Among English poets of his own generation he has, thus, a place to himself. His ideal in poetry was the jewelled phrase, the gem-like verse, the exquisitely chiselled stanza or poem: his abhorrence the preaching, didactic, fluently romantic, emotional and sentimental poets. "It is not," he declared, "the poet's business to save man's soul but to make it worth saving." It was his belief that contemporary English poetry could only be rescued from the chaos into which, as it appeared to him, it was falling, through the poet's ignorance and the absence of any guiding principle, by the recognition that genius unaided of knowledge was as prone to disaster as in everyday life emotion without strength degenerates into sentimentalism. He admitted that fine poetry had been written upon no theory at all and bad poetry composed upon excellent principles. "But," to use his own words from the preface to *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*, "that a sound theory can produce sound practice, and exercise a beneficent effect upon writers of genius, has been repeatedly proved in the short but glorious history of the 'Parnasse.'"

It was not at once that Flecker developed his theory, nor, when once it was fully present to his mind, can it be said that his faith and practice were always consistent. The one volume representing the art of poetry as Flecker conceived it, *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* (1913), was preceded by *The Bridge of Fire* (1907) and *Forty-two Poems* (1911). *The Golden Journey* is not only the pattern of poetry as Flecker wished to write, it illustrates his affectation of a love of the East, in which he was a little disillusioned by his short experience in the consular service at Constantinople after earlier years spent at Oxford and Cambridge and in teaching. The East in his imagination, before he saw it, was the dreamland of the Arabian Nights, a country of flaming colours, burning sunlight, the exotic and the unreal; for it was no part of his ideal in poetry to transfigure the common events and scenes of daily life. He laboured rather, even more than Keats and Francis Thompson, to practise his art for its own sake, using words appealing both to eye and ear, avoiding the influences of

emotionalism and the subject. His most important volume is written " with the single intention of creating beauty," not to reveal the poet's mind or offer any reading of life's meaning.

The theory adopted by Flecker has been followed more or less whole-heartedly by other poets, but by none with an entirely faithful allegiance, for it neglects wilfully the complete nature of man; and Flecker is not more successful than those who went before him. Inwoven damask and stiffly-figured tapestries can only be a lesser form of art: in the end the craftsman lapses into working by design and rule, unmoved by love and joy. The poet in like manner, who conceives of his art as an ornament, will hardly escape unless, as is most probable, he is governed only intermittently by the logic of his theory.

When he wrote the title-poem of *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* Flecker had his theory constantly in mind, and the poem, despite all its beauty of phrase, fails to give more than a transient pleasure; for the poet's formula is writ clear and the evidence of composition is plain.

> " We have rose-candy, we have spikenard,
> Mastic and terebinth and oil and spice,
> And such sweet jams meticulously jarred
> As God's own Prophet eats in Paradise."

Neither the manner nor the wording is new or original; others have affected the like preciosity, and art is more than a cloying sweetness. In a similar mood of intellectualism Flecker wrote ' The Gates of Damascus,' ' In Phæacia ' and other poems shaped to his theory: but not in all is he successful in maintaining the impersonality and objectivity of his ideal, for a natural emotion will intrude or a passing sentiment.

> " Or when the wind beneath the moon is drifting like a soul aswoon,
> And harping planets talk love's tune with milky wings outspread, Yasmin,
>
> Shower down thy love, O burning bright! For one night or the other night
> Will come the Gardener in white, and gathered flowers are dead, Yasmin."

And there are other poems, ' Oak and Olive ' for example, in which the theory is frankly abandoned for songs of the heart's desire. Further, many of the verses collected in *The Old Ships* (1915), including the fine title-poem, are undisguisedly more subjective and personal. But before all the poems of this posthumously published booklet had been written Europe was torn asunder ; and the war was not without its influence on Flecker's writing, as, in especial, the noble faith and hope of his ode, ' The Burial in England,' bear witness.

CHAPTER IV

THE POETESSES

Laurence Hope—Michael Field—Mary Coleridge—Rosamund Marriott Watson—Lady Margaret Sackville—Ethel Clifford.

THE nineteenth century witnessed a continuous influx of women into the fields of fiction and poetry. The eighteenth century was far from being without its women writers, although many hid themselves behind the screen of a pseudonym; and as late as the time of George Eliot and the Brontës it was generally felt to be but natural and becoming for a woman to adopt a pen-name. But the greater freedom of women's lives in an age when education, travel and social intercourse had become as easy for them as for men, led to an enormous increase in the number of poetesses and women novelists, and, it may be added, a marked improvement in the quality of their work. The only woman's name of any importance in poetry at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, during one of the greatest periods of renaissance in English poetry, is Joanna Baillie, who is now forgotten, or only remembered as a pale reflection of the romantic tendencies of the time. But before her death Elizabeth Barrett and Christina Rossetti were known as poetesses, and the contrast is a parable of change, for the volumes of Christina Rossetti rightfully take their place with the nobler and greater poetry of the period. If, however, it be possible to strike a general average in poetry and fiction during the last half-century, it will be seen that, both in quality and quantity, women attain a more widely distributed and lasting success in prose. Apart from Mrs. Browning and Christina Rossetti there are no poetesses in the last century who can presume to claim an equal standing with the greater poets of the age. And *mutatis mutandis*, when we lower

our scale, it remains equally true that the poetry which makes a difference, shaping the courses of verse in recent years, comes from men. There are no poetesses to place with Mr. W. B. Yeats, Mr. Arthur Symons or John Davidson. Yet modern English poetry is the better, and more especially lyric song, for the writing of women.

The work of two poetesses, Mrs. Woods and Mrs. Meynell, the one possessed of almost masculine strength, the other of fragile delicacy, has already been noticed. But in either case inspiration is fleeting and capricious, for the volume of their verse is strangely small: and neither poetess suggests abundant resource. This is not wholly to be counted to their discredit; for careless and indiscriminate fluency is the failing of many women versifiers. This charge cannot be brought against Laurence Hope, Michael Field, Mary Coleridge and Mrs. Marriott Watson, who claim places of distinction and honour in the story of poetry within the last quarter of a century. And each follows individual aims, betraying little if any relation to the others.

Laurence Hope, 1865–1904.

The passion and fire of Laurence Hope's lyric inspiration is astonishing. An element of the voluptuous has militated against her fame, but it is time to recognise that this is neither the reason nor ground of her poetry, for there is a tenderness, a strength and a depth of feeling in many of her poems which raise them far above the level of erotic songs. It may be that youth and passionate love are the keynotes of her poems of the East. But this was not all: and as she wrote she lived. Laurence Hope (Mrs. Adela Florence Nicholson) was born in England, but in 1889 she married a colonel in the Indian army and settled in Madras. The capacity for intense passion and regret, reflected in her writings, was illustrated in her last act, suicide by poison in 1904, two months after her husband's death.

Laurence Hope is directly descended from the writers of the *Yellow Book* and *Savoy*. Her background is different, but in psychological subtlety and frankness she was nearer to Mr. Arthur Symons than any other modern poet. The atmosphere and environment are changed from the roaring streets and flaring lights of London and

Paris to the burning days and still moonlight nights of the Orient; but in essence these are Western poems, as Western as Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. Yet nobody has translated the East into English poetry with a like passion and beauty. Moore and the vogue he established, which communicated itself even to Shelley, need not be taken into account. In poetry Sir Alfred Lyall and Sir Edwin Arnold are largely concerned with philosophic concepts, and Mr. Rudyard Kipling sees India given up to Tommy Atkins and the English civilian. Laurence Hope communicates the spell and mysterious fascination of the blue skies and bronze shadows of the Orient, its vast inchoate life, its silences, the age-old habits of its life and thought, its perfumes, its passions, hates, loves and the transient swiftness of its youth. But the pervasion of her lyrics with the neurosis of sex is a mode of the Paris boulevard and the ballet stage of London. By far the greater number of Laurence Hope's poems are lyrics of sexual passion, and these reflect the mind of the West not the thought of the East, which accepts woman without vexation of spirit as an ordinary incident of life. When we have dispossessed our minds of the idea that her poems mirror the soul of the East, we can see that she owes a heavy debt to Swinburne and to younger English poets who were influenced by the French Romantics and Symbolists.

Youth and passionate love—these are the breath and the spirit of her poetry. Yet she was in her thirty-seventh year and drawing toward middle age before she published her first volume, *The Garden of Kama* (1902). In her lifetime only one more volume, *Stars of the Desert* (1903), appeared. *Indian Love* (1905) was published posthumously. The small collection of stray *Poems* (1907), inspired by other lands than India, is so inferior to her other work that it barely calls for mention.

Sensuous, impassioned, dreamy, melancholy, voluptuously wistful, these are terms of description which come to the pen when we turn over her volumes. Passionate intensity of hope, regret and love was given to Laurence Hope, and the fragments of Sappho recur to mind as we read her verse. A voluptuous abandon is not, however, the whole meaning of her thought and poetry. A deep

melancholy and eager pessimism underlie all her work. She can write—

"I am so weary of the Curse of Living
The endless, aimless torture, tumult, fears.
Surely, if life were any God's free giving
He, seeing His gift, long since went blind with tears."

And this is no affectation or pose, but a cry wrung from the heart. A poem like 'Rutland Gate' is evidence of her humanitarian sympathy and her power to feel pity for those crushed out in the battle of life. And beyond the dreams of impassioned love, in moments of quiet she realised that

"... the joy of life is hid
In simple and tender things."

Nor need we look in vain, in the volumes of Laurence Hope, for poetry in the greater manner, a poetry of language laden with beauty and meaning combined.

"And this is our Wisdom: we rest together,
On the great lone hills in the storm-filled weather,
And watch the skies as they pale and burn,
The golden stars in their orbits turn,
While Love is with us, and Time and Peace,
And life has nothing to give but these."

Writing like this has the power and spell of deep and sincere emotion. The 'Famine Song' and 'O, Life, I have taken you for my Lover' carry with them the sudden excitation of great and noble poetry. Though her writing is, in the general mind, associated with another kind of poetry, her temper is often melancholy, grave, severe. Undeniably, there was also another side of life she knew—physical love; and, quite mistakenly, for many this is the only significance of Laurence Hope. Old age she understood, middle age with its important selfishness she dreaded, but youth and its passionate joy in loving were the chief themes of her song. For youth is the fullness of life and cries:

"Do as thou wilt with mine and me,
Beloved, I only pray.
Follow the promptings of thy youth.
Let there be no delay!"

Yet, with all her insistence on a single aspect of life, she rarely sinks, like many erotic poets, into meaningless ecstasy. A poem like the 'Song of Gulbaz' occurs to the mind as merely sensuously pretty and ineffective, but its very flatness stamps it, even for the hurried reader, as a surprising anomaly among her poems.

In general Laurence Hope's word-music is spirited and accurate without exhibiting the finer graces and beauties of a more accomplished metrist. She does not often lapse into ugly lines like—

"Solace I my despairing soul with this."

Nor is she often guilty of unnecessary slips like the split infinitive of

"But now, God knows, what use to still be tender,"

or the colloquial slanginess of

"Yet, when we rested, night-times, on the sand."

As a rule her English is simple and good.

If the higher enthusiasm of Laurence Hope's nature had burned more constantly and clearly she would oftener have written in the stronger and more impersonal manner of her greater poems; but, though intellectual power and the love of fine thinking were with her, a passionate lyric emotion took her life in hand. Yet, despite the enervating character of much that she has written, she has left many pages of fine and moving poetry. The most characteristic and personal of her poems are contained in the first and third of her volumes. *Stars of the Desert*, save for a few pages, is hardly so good a book as the other two.

Michael Field.

It would be difficult to find a greater contrast than that afforded by an apposition of *The Garden of Kama* and *Underneath the Bough*. Restraint and chiselled beauty of form mark the poems of Miss Bradley and Miss Cooper, who wrote under the pseudonym, Michael Field.[1] A large part of their writing is literary drama in verse. Several of the plays deal with English and Scotch history. *The Father's Tragedy* (1885) is founded upon the

[1] Miss Cooper died 1913; Miss Bradley 1914.

story of David, Earl of Rothesay, *The Tragic Mary* (1890) upon the life of Mary, Queen of Scots : and *Fair Rosamund* (1884), *William Rufus* (1886) and *Canute the Great* (1887) are other historical plays written in imitation of the Elizabethans. *Callirrhöe* (1884) and *Brutus Ultor* (1887) have classical themes, but are scarcely classical in feeling. None of these is arresting : they hardly rise above the interest of all fine literary experiment. The supremely beautiful lyrical genius of Michael Field is best seen in shorter poems, and first in the consummate success of *Long Ago* (1889), which attempts the hazardous task of extending the fragments of Sappho. These are each poems of crystalline clearness, of exquisite beauty in form and music. Not less perfect are the nature poems and love-lyrics, nearly all of them very short, of *Underneath the Bough* (1893). These are songs as ethereal in sound as the iridescent colours of sunlight falling upon the glittering spray of the cascade, like snatches of melody heard faintly in the distance. Slight in content as they are, in crystalline purity scarcely any writing of the last three decades will compare with these poems. The influence of Herrick and the Caroline poets is hardly to be overlooked, but the element of imitativeness does not detract from the beauty of the whole.

The poems of *Sight and Song* (1892), an attempt in an exceedingly artificial mode, betray the effort of trying to say something where nothing useful is to be said; and these lyrics, which seek to translate into words the line and colour of some of the world's great pictures, are often laboured, although several, like 'The Birth of Venus,' in which the picture is of little account save as a suggestion, are among the most beautiful of Michael Field's poems. These three early volumes, printed in limited editions, contain more that is supremely beautiful than any other of Michael Field's books. *Wild Honey* (1908) loses something of the ethereal and indefinable grace of the early lyrics, and *Poems of Adoration* (1912) suffers from the unavoidable limitations of all religious verse. The theme is written up to and upon; it does not spring unsought.

There is little contact with the actualities of everyday life in Michael Field's lyrics and shorter poems. Art,

literature, nature and love seen through the haze of literary culture, these are the writers' sources of inspiration. But the gem-like finish and perfection, the harmony of style and thought, the simple directness of these poems lends them a unique beauty. And, if the stress of life is not felt, these brief lyrics are far from empty of matter; if they do not bear the impress of thought and great emotion, they generally express something that was worthy the singing, and always the expression is finely and delicately wrought. No analogy so readily springs to the mind in describing these poems as the image of the clear crystal with sunlight falling upon it. Michael Field marks no tendency. These volumes inherit from the Elizabethan and Caroline poets, they are shaped by a life of seclusion and culture and by the love of all that is best in the world's art. There is here no great writing; but within their own limits Michael Field's lyrics almost reach perfection.

Laurence Hope was a poetess of her age and time, betraying its influences, reflecting its motives, while time and place have left few marks on the poetry of Michael Field, whose art is produced in a haven of seclusion from the battle of contemporary life. Mary E. Coleridge is more sensitive to the pain of living, but as it is felt in solitude, not in the stress of the larger world. She reflects in no distinctive way any tendencies of her time. Her life was quiet, she was not unfriendly, but she did not easily communicate herself in the chance of social intercourse. Her historical romances, prose fantasies and poems were as unlikely to win recognition from the average reviewer as the general public, and she remained but little known save to a small group, though Stevenson praised *The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus* (1893), the first of her prose fantasies, and Mr. Robert Bridges encouraged her in the publication of her verse. In her lifetime she printed two small books of poetry, *Fancy's Following* (1896) and *Fancy's Guerdon* (1897), but it is the slight collection of two hundred and thirty-seven short poems, published after her death, which represents Mary Coleridge as a poetess. She led a shy and lonely life, treasuring her days in imagination and

Mary E. Coleridge, 1861–1907.

memory, conscious of her own failure to take a part in the larger activities and enthusiasms. Her nature was reserved: she stayed her soul on a melancholy wistfulness in default of strong convictions. Her verse is the outcome not of enduring emotion, but the eager hopes and quiet regrets of a moment; and for her the world of dreams was more than everyday reality. In incident her life was poor: in mood and sensation it was rich. But her poetry, beautiful though it is, is unnerving; it is a pessimism of regret for the things unuttered, a doubt whether the ideals can be true, unredeemed by any stoic courage or wide humanitarian sympathy. She questions the universe, and never in the hope of an answer. Mary Coleridge scarcely belonged to her generation. She was the descendant of Clough and Arnold, troubled with weakening apprehensions and religious difficulties, but she was unsupported by the ethical strength of the Rugby poets. She had no enthusiasm with the writers of a younger generation to play heartily the game of life for the season in which it is given. To read the collected *Poems* (1907) is to suspect we have chanced upon a document which has strayed inadvertently out of the 'sixties.

Rosamund Marriott Watson, 1863–1911.

The poetry of Mrs. Rosamund Marriott Watson is optimistic in temper, and for this, perhaps, as for other reasons she has the pen of a more ready writer than Mary Coleridge and less distinction of manner. Nevertheless, her verse-writing takes its place but little below the best in recent years. She wrote nothing that was careless, nothing that was not the reflex of a mind fastidious in the choice of words and imbued with a love of fine literature. And not only is her workmanship good, her sense of literary responsibility unfailing—she possessed in addition a genuine lyrical gift. But to read her collected *Poems* (1912) is to make us wish for a poet a little more unequal: as there are few deep subsidences in her writing so there are few hills. *A Summer Night* (1891) gave evidence of matured power and a gift of handling words, which placed it above *A Bird-bride* (1889); but in the next two volumes, *Vespertilia* (1895) and *After Sunset* (1904) there is nothing of an outstanding

character, and her latest poems, *The Lamp and the Lute* (1912) repeated, not quite so well, themes, thoughts and moods which already had appeared sufficiently often. She is always admirably simple and lucid, exact in her use of words, and her metres are written almost impeccably; but her thoughts are few and she rings the changes upon them too often in a long series of short poems, for her output was creditable in quantity. The joy of earth, of town, of friendship, the wind on the downs, the eager air of the sea, clouds in the sky, the song of birds—in a continuous refrain these thoughts and images are reiterated. Her range is, therefore, limited; she is not often weak nor often impassioned. Rarely does a strong impulse carry Mrs. Watson beyond herself and inform her poetry with a high emotion. The fine poem, 'Resurgam,' is an exception to this generalisation. But it is in poems of nature that the talent of Mrs. Marriott Watson is seen at its best; she does not yield to weak ecstasies and she is never coldly self-conscious like Mary Coleridge. Her melancholy, and it appears not infrequently, is not, as with so many poets of the day, an irrational anger with the universal order, for she was glad to live and not ashamed to confess it. And a high merit she possessed was an ear for the fit conjunction of sound and sense. An example, perhaps the best example, may be given from one of her earliest poems, the 'Scythe Song,' with its refrain so magically suggestive of the rustle and swish of the gleaming blade through the damp meadow grasses—

"Hush! the Scythe says, *where, ah where?*"

Lady Margaret Sackville, b. 1882.

Lady Margaret Sackville is always simple, always lucid: she shows the love of fine form, of beauty intellectually conceived, which is commonly associated with the classical temper in literature. In her choice of classical subjects for her dramatic poems she falls into a group with Mr. Hewlett, Mr. Binyon and Mr. Sturge Moore, and in power of dramatic characterisation she is more than their equal. The tragedy of *Hildris the Queen* (1908) is written in skilfully handled, nervous and energetic blank verse; and *Bertrud and Other Dramatic*

Poems (1911) contains three dramatic pieces, ' The Wooing of Dionysus,' ' Tereus ' and ' Bertrud,' of rare distinction. These are dramatic poems written to be read and not acted, but they are dramatically conceived and the characters realistically defined. The story of Bertrud, the Queen, defamed to her husband by Gerta, and how she yielded place to save the tortured soul of her unworthy rival, is told with admirably restrained force and pathos. The thoughts of the poem are beautifully and nobly expressed. Nor is there in the poetry of Lady Sackville any suspicion of careless facility, the almost universal failing of feminine verse-writing. She always leaves an impression of a reserve in strength, and exercises a praise-worthy economy in the use of words. But it may be questioned whether she would not do well to write poetry more purely lyrical, despite the success of her dramatic poems. The lyrics contained in ' The Wooing of Dionysus ' are better than the poetic narrative ; and in *Poems* (1901), *A Hymn to Dionysus and Other Poems* (1905) and *Songs of Aphrodite* (1913) there are beautiful lyrics which excite a regret that we have so few from the same hand. ' The Helots ' is a singularly fine and spirited poem ; ' The Death of Beatrice ' is beautifully conceived and imaginatively expressed ; and among outstanding poems of the 1905 volume are ' Sunset,' ' The Celts ' and ' The Queen's Cabinet.' The octosyllables of the last-named poem recall Keats's ' Eve of St. Mark.' The atmosphere of vague and drowsy mystery, the description of the room rich with costly furniture and hangings, of the air laden with heavy perfume and haunted by a hovering fear—all this is suggestive of Keats, but not as a tame imitation ; for ' The Queen's Cabinet,' in sheer beauty of imagery and music, is the most consummate piece of poetry Lady Sackville has written. A poem like this is worth several of her dramas. Dramatic poetry not for the stage is always something of an anomaly ; whatever elements of pure poetry it holds are hampered and at a disadvantage. But Lady Sackville notably combines lyric faculty with the dramatic instinct. And she always writes with a fine sense of the fitting, avoiding attempts to surprise by wealth of imagery, passion of metaphor or the laboured and far-sought pictorial phrase. Her style is invariably

reserved and simple, yet it rarely becomes flat or unemotional.

Lady Sackville writes in a style and manner individual and self-formed; whenever she recalls greater poetry it is because she has made its spirit her own, not because she echoes with variations the music of phrases and lines she has learned. But the poetry of Ethel Clifford (Mrs. Fisher Wentworth Dilke) is an example at its best of much feminine and derivative verse-writing. In *Songs of Dreams* (1903) and *Love's Journey* (1905) she invests her world with an atmosphere of sentiment which is never mawkish, her rhythms are the outcome of a good literary consciousness, and she displays a gift of gentle and pleasing song. If her melodies have little individual charm, her art no high felicity, a quiet grace distinguishes her verse. Her themes are the common things of sight and sound: she sings of them not as clearly or strongly as Mrs. Marriott Watson, but she is, perhaps, less monotonous in her repetitions than several of the Irish poetesses. Grass, leaves, clouds, rain, the song of birds and the murmuring of the stream—from these she rarely wanders to strike a bolder note as in 'The Song of the Heathen.' A gentle air of melancholy sentiment and a sympathy with the literary expression of thoughts—these are the marks of her writing.

Ethel Clifford.

PART II

IRISH POETS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

CHAPTER I

THE CELTIC REVIVAL

MATTHEW ARNOLD urged that for literary purposes Europe must be regarded as a great confederation; and in so doing he was impelled by the beliefs that English criticism and letters suffered from insularity and that the strong influence of Carlyle's Teutonism had not been without its ill consequences. With Carlyle he could recognise the genius of Goethe and admit the supremacy of *Faust* above all modern poetry, but he held that English letters had sufficiently yielded to the influence of German romanticism. To counteract insularity and vague romanticism he exhorted his countrymen to admire the sanity and logic of the French people. Arnold's desire was more than merely to oppose Gallic lucidity to Teutonic romance and incoherence, his ideal was such a literature as irrespective of climatic and racial accidents should express the best that has been thought and with a universal meaning. A spirit of reaction against the romantic tendency of his time led him to ask what was neither possible nor good. His ideal was nearly realised in the eighteenth century, an age in which the consciousness of nationality was weak. Nations were conceived as centralisations of arbitrary authority, not as men united by common ties of life, tradition, custom and faith; and literature did not escape the effect of this economic theory. It adopted the institutional view of its functions as definitely as this principle governed economic concepts. Classicism, which was primarily Latinism, was arbiter and ruler, and writers sought to model themselves by the canons of classic taste, not to utter what lay in and about them. Boileau reigned in France, Pope in England, and Germany to the middle of the century was content to serve in obedience to the classic convention. As the nation was regarded as a collection of men held together

by a legislation externally imposed, so literature was accepted as an institution founded upon well-defined principles, subservient to rules devised of old. This concept reflected both less and more than incapacity for originality. The eighteenth century was, at the least, emphatically a century of high distinction in intellectual power; but it went astray in adopting a false theory of life, a false theory which lay in part at the root of Arnold's protest against the romanticism of his period. The inspiration of writers in different countries was drawn from sources non-national, in the belief, whether consciously conceived and stated or not, that thus poetry and the arts were imbued with a universality whereby they overcame the limitations of diverse language and national exclusiveness. But the literary and artistic standard which knows no confines of climate or race, yet has an individual life of its own, has not hitherto been, and probably never will be; for, despite the wide and rapid diffusion of common knowledge in our day and an immense acceleration in means of communication, nationality, provincialism and locality are continuously more emphasised in literature. And a most cursory survey of the past is sufficient to dispel the illusion that literature derives a more enduring life in so far as it dissociates itself from the accidents of time and place. The idioms and modes of thought of the Greek dramatists are bound up with the traditions of a small city-state; Shakespeare is summed as "not of an age but for all time," and this despite the fact that he was an Elizabethan Englishman, more subject to the limitations of his age than a Bacon or a Raleigh. And what is true of these is true no less of all great writers and their work. Nationality, local idiosyncrasy and the accidents of time, scarcely less than the power of genius to rise above the limitations of time and place, contribute to that inner truth and reality without which the arts, though they may please, die with their begetters. For style is not merely the man, in Buffon's phrase, it is the man conditioned by and relative to the accidents of his birth and environment. The prose of Plato and Hooker is, perhaps, not the only but certainly the chief cause contributory to their immortality; and this prose is the thought of the individual

expressing itself in the best and noblest form of speech garnered from the common language of the day. The mingled quaintness and splendour of North, Hooker and Browne had no great ring of fine unfamiliarity to the first readers. The truth of Buffon's aphorism lies in this—that style, both true and strong, can never flow from sources merely literary, for it is a river of life. If the ideal of Arnold and others be a good rule for the critic to bear in mind, it tends to confusion when it leads to depreciation of a poetry and prose that derives from the strips and margins of experience, unconscious of the greater whole.

In modern creative literature the tendency, doubtless, has been to emphasise the distinctions of nationality. Arnold himself, with the publication of *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), contributed to the interest of study into racial characteristics; and he has been followed by some wise and many foolish writers who treat of the Celtic spirit. Inevitably the Celt, whether of Brittany, Scotland or Ireland, learned to play the *rôle* expected of him in various guises of melancholy and mysticism. But the Celt has not been alone in asserting his nationality. England, Russia, Germany, France, Italy, the United States have all found expositors of the national spirit, either conceived in the whole or mirrored in small provinces, counties and towns. Provincialism has become the prevailing note in French fiction, hardly less so in Germany, every county in England has its chronicler, and our colonies have given birth to their own writers. And this decentralisation of literature may be regarded as one aspect of the widespread agitation for decentralisation of government, which is but a natural reaction against the extension of world-empires with wide, involved and complicated interests. But the literature of the Celtic races is not, as is the new literature of our colonies or America, the expression of a full and overflowing life, it is the refuge of a little people driven into the corners of the earth and prevented only by the western sea from flying further. The Celt from his islands, his margins of strand and his fastnesses in the barren hills has flung back, in these latter years, upon the onset of a material civilisation a spiritual, religious and mystical

poetry, prose and drama, as in the old unhappy days he flung himself in vain upon the oncoming Saxon, Dane and Norman.

As a direct expression of "provincialism" among writers in English no tendency within recent years has been of greater interest than the Celtic Renascence. It is not wholly new. No single modern book, embodying the Celtic spirit in the manifestations by custom associated with it, melancholy and mysticism, has had a tithe of the influence exercised by Macpherson's *Ossian* (1760–63), which, if it met with some contempt in England, produced effects almost magical in France and Germany. The Arthurian Cycle of Celtic tales found an enduring form in English much earlier than this in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1485), although in this splendid adaptation the tales have lost much of their authentic character; and Malory is not to be counted with the manifestations of the Celtic spirit as we count Macpherson or Lady Charlotte Guest, whose translation of the *Mabinogion* (1838–49) did in a lesser degree for Wales what Macpherson had achieved triumphantly for the highlands of Scotland. But the Celtic Revival of recent years within the British Isles has been almost entirely Irish. William Sharp is the most striking example of the Celtic spirit in Scotland, for George Macdonald and Mr. Neil Munro are but partially Celtic and some of their best writing belongs to other spheres of work. T. E. Brown, likewise, is not chiefly of interest as a manifestation of the Celticism of the Isle of Man. The Celtic elements of Scotland and Wales have only received incidental and passing reflection in modern literature, but Ireland has produced some of the noblest, the most sincere and the most beautiful poetry, and the most imaginatively truthful drama recently written in English. The poems of A. E. and the early poems of Mr. W. B. Yeats have an individuality beyond that of all but two or three contemporary poets writing in England; and no other writer in our language can compare to-day, in drama that is at once poetry and the highest truth, with the author of *The Well of the Saints*.

Nevertheless, the inspiration of the Irish poets is at least as much climatic and local as racial. A flood of unthinking and nonsensical writing has been poured over

the Celtic Revival; and the poor Saxon, who is supposed to be without those divine gifts of idealism and mystic vision granted to the race he has driven before him, has been patronisingly belittled. It is no depreciation of the work done by Irish writers in our day to say that even in those faculties more peculiarly arrogated to the Celt he has never approached the depth and breadth of the Teuton, and that the whole literary output of the Celtic races, so-called, sinks into insignificance in comparison with the work of the Teuton. Goethe was greatly moved by *Ossian*, but no Celt has yet written a *Faust;* and it is a question to be asked why the Ossianic poems should have found their warmest admirers with a Teutonic people. Again Shelley was an Anglo-Saxon, Blake a mere Londoner, yet they surely, by all the signs of their calling, should be of the Celtic race? If it be a matter of weighing the vision of beauty and the power of mystic idealism vouchsafed to the Celt against the measure of these gifts as they have been bestowed on the Teuton or the Latin no impartial judgment could find a moment of hesitation. The faculties supposititiously the inheritance of the Celt are not intrinsically his; and in powers of thought he falls behind most peoples. Celtic myth and literature come from the outskirts of the larger life of Europe; and it is to this seclusion from the bustle and pressure of a commercial civilisation we may attribute the brooding dreaminess of Celtic legend and poetry. And in so far as we speak of Irish writers to-day it may be questioned whether they are, individually or collectively, of another race to writers on the other side of the Irish Sea. We are of mixed blood in these islands, and not least so in Ireland; and the accident of birth rather than the inheritance of tendencies transmitted through generations explains whatever is peculiar to the work of modern Irish dramatists and poets.

The Irish novel scarcely enters for contrast, for it has never in any essential or important manner differentiated itself from the novel written in England. The typical novels of Carleton, Lover and Lever represent with abounding burlesque and exaggeration of humour the Irish peasant and country gentleman in the earlier half of the last century. It was the work of the last two

especially to create the stage Irishman as he is still pictured by the average Englishman of to-day, despite the exposure of Mr. Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, and the introduction of a new convention in the sorrowful and poetic Irishman of the modern drama and a few novels. Lever's drawing was not wholly out of truth, for Ireland seventy years ago, before the blight of the great famine, was a richer, happier and more careless country than it is to-day. But, like other lands, Ireland reflects the light at many angles, and the convention of Synge and his imitators is probably no less a practice in the art of omission than the rollicking, devil-may-care manner of Lever.

In recent years, though Miss Barlow, Katharine Tynan, Canon Sheehan, George A. Birmingham and Mr. James Stephens be not forgotten, Ireland has done no work of importance, though much that is charming and pleasurable, in prose fiction. In poetry and drama it is another story. The drama of the Irish Literary Theatre is notable and significant, not only in its beauty, its poetry and its truthfulness, but as an example of reaction against the European vogue of bald realism in stagecraft, which was the outward sign of Ibsen's triumph after a long uphill fight for recognition. Unfortunately this independence in style and method, which was grateful in an age when Germany, France and England had leagued to pursue "realism" as the only approved method of play writing, has not been sustained; for in the work of Mr. Lennox Robinson, Mr. St. John Ervine and other younger members of the school a tendency to fall back under the influence of Ibsen, Hauptmann and Mr. Galsworthy is only too apparent. All that was best in the nationalism of Synge, Lady Gregory and Mr. Rutherford Mayne is being lost, and nothing is substituted save the practice of a dramatic method which by others has been handled with greater skill and power. Irish literary drama, as expressive of the peculiarities of a life and habit removed from the greater cycle of European art, has probably seen its day, but not before it has produced plays of great beauty in conception, distinctive originality in language and method of character-drawing, and alive with a common and national aspiration. Synge has written

masterpieces of dramatic genius which can only die with the language: and though Mr. Yeats' faculty is lyric, not dramatic, and the work of Lady Gregory, Mr. Edward Martyn, Mr. Rutherford Mayne and the other Irish dramatists falls far below that of Synge, there is in their writings a freshness, a force and a literary power which raises their plays above the plane of drama composed only for the boards and without meaning in printed form.

In poetry the Irish Renascence does not present features that can readily be co-ordinated. Literature, not life, is often the fountain source, and there is frequently little of the spirit of nationalism in the poets whom we may gather in loose collocation as Irish. At no time has Irish poetry, as a whole, been distinctively national, and the epithet Celtic, as has been hinted, is a misnomer if it is used to appropriate to Irish poets brooding melancholy, wistful mysticism and fervent idealism,—characteristics which in the poetry of England, Germany, India and virtually any land appear and mingle with other and differing tendencies. No one would claim that Tom Moore, George Darley and Aubrey de Vere peculiarly and essentially reflected Ireland. Mangan, who belonged to the Young Ireland party and adapted Gaelic lyrics to the English, has greater claims to be regarded as an Irish poet on the strength of *My Dark Rosaleen* and other poems, whether translations or originals; but he is at least as fine and inspired a poet when he writes of subjects that are not Irish. Nothing, as Professor Hugh Walker observes, "surpasses, if indeed anything equals, the best of the Oriental section, *The Karamanian Exile*, with its daring imagination, its fine swinging rhythm, its skilful use of the proper name and of Mangan's favourite device of repetition."[1] Nor can Arthur O'Shaugnessy, Oscar Wilde and Mr. Herbert Trench be accounted, with any meaning, Irish rather than English; for their best work has nothing to do with Ireland and affords no example of hereditary transmission of characteristics. If other poets, living or not long dead, may with greater show of reason be collected as Irish, this demarcation must in many cases be taken to imply but little. Mr. W. B. Yeats, though he has chosen his subjects in lyric and dramatic verse

[1] *The Literature of the Victorian Era*, p. 359.

from Ireland's store of older myth and legend, can find elsewhere an equal source of inspiration, for his enthusiasm springs from literature not life; the poetry of A. E., though cast against a background of Irish landscape, in its vision of a unity of sentient life in man and the universe borrows from the thought and sacred poetry of India more than from any influences peculiarly those of Ireland; Miss Eva Gore-Booth reflects mystic thought from Heraclitus to Paracelsus; Dr. Douglas Hyde is a translator; Lionel Johnson, Norah Hopper and Mr. James Stephens are only incidentally Irish.

Nevertheless, if the poets of Irish birth be grouped together it would be idle to deny the presence in their work, taken in the whole, of a mysticism and wistfulness which is not so markedly apparent in any considerable group of more purely English poets. And these characteristics, if not wholly racial, at least borrow from climatic and physical environment, they are one manifestation of a group-soul; and, thus understood, the word Celtic may serve to describe the literature and mind of certain peoples whose lot has been cast in the western margins and mountainous districts of France and these islands.

CHAPTER II

IRISH POETS

W. B. Yeats—A. E.—Douglas Hyde—Lionel Pigot Johnson—J. M. Synge—Padraic Colum—James Stephens—'John Eglinton'—Charles Weekes—J. H. Cousins—Thomas Keohler—George Sigerson—'Seumas MacCathmhaoil'—Seumas O'Sullivan.

William Butler Yeats, b. 1865.

For many Mr. W. B. Yeats is the "indicating number" of the Celtic Revival, and in this conception of him they are justified, although in each of his activities he has, perhaps, been surpassed by other members of the group to which he belongs. The finest mystical lyrics of A. E., in their combination of utter simplicity with substantial force, have not been rivalled by Mr. Yeats, from whose manner a tinge of artifice has never wholly been absent; and in later years this has developed into deliberate and calculated symbolism. Although some of his greater passages of poetry are to be found in the verse dramas, although he has carefully studied and cultivated play-writing, his dramatic faculty remains weak; and here Irish writers of less note are easily his superiors. In knowledge of the older literature, legend and language of Ireland he is the inferior of Dr. Douglas Hyde, President of the Gaelic League, who has done more than any living man for the study of Gaelic. But Mr. Yeats has with M. Maeterlinck, another mystic of like character, an underlying instinct for practical affairs, and he has done more for the literary revival in Ireland by inspiring others with a common hope and ideal than by any writing of his own, important as that is. To his unwavering enthusiasm is to be attributed the growth of the Irish Literary Theatre from its beginnings in London with English actors, through its vicissitudes and progress in Dublin from the Antient Concert Rooms to the Abbey

Theatre with its company of native actors and actresses. The genius of Mr. Yeats is undramatic, but he has been the cause that drama is in others. He discovered Synge and persuaded him to return to Ireland to write great drama in place of commonplace critiques of French authors; he united as workers with one aim Mr. Edward Martyn, Mr. Rutherford Mayne, Mr. Padraic Colum and others whom it were needless to name; he brought Lady Gregory into the group, to relieve with her native gift of farcical humour a repertory that inclined the scale too far in the direction of the sombre, the tragic and the purely literary; and for a short time the scepticism of Mr. George Moore yielded to the spell of his enthusiasm, and the absentee Irish landlord-author remembered his own land. By the power to communicate a personal enthusiasm Mr. Yeats has been the prompter in others of more good work than he himself has produced; for, despite the beauty of part, and especially the earlier part, of his work as a poet, his genius as a writer of lyric has greatly failed him since he published *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899); and his finest poetry after that date appears in isolated passages of the dramas, and more especially in *The Shadowy Waters* (1900) and *Deirdre* (1907). Despite a career of literary activity that is now not short the quantity of Mr. Yeats' poetry that is of a high order is not large. Not all the shorter lyrics are noteworthy; none rises to the same plane of mystic rapture as the more inspired lines of A. E.; the beauty of one or two of the verse dramas is a beauty sustained in spite of the form and context; but in three poems, *The Wanderings of Oisin*, *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart's Desire*, Mr. Yeats has conceived and written something that is peculiarly his own and of a character that once written will not easily be forgotten.

The close of the last century saw a marked revival of interest in things Irish and of all that is best in Irish life. The National Literary Society was founded in Dublin in 1892; in 1893 the Gaelic League was established, and in the same year the Irish Literary Society in London held its first meeting. A little later, in 1899, the Irish Literary Theatre arranged its first performances in Dublin. Before this new growth of interest in national life and literature

definitely manifested itself to the outward eye and became known beyond Ireland Mr. Yeats had won his laurels, and nothing that he has written since the inauguration of the Irish Literary Theatre has affected or enhanced his position as a poet.

Mr. William Butler Yeats, the son of an Irish artist, was born in Dublin in 1865. His father's following first led him to the study of painting, but he soon began to contribute poems and stories to Irish periodicals. In these years his imagination grew under the spell of the folk-tales and myths of older Ireland and the greys and greens of Irish landscape. Delving in libraries among translations from the Gaelic and sitting by turf-fires in Connaught he saturated his mind in mystic tale, legend and song, and he passed on to edit folk and fairy tales and stories from Carleton. He has since continued the practice of prose, and from this early date Mr. Yeats' work may be divided into miscellaneous prose, that poetry which is primarily lyric and the dramatic poetry which followed upon the foundation of the Irish Literary Theatre. From another standpoint three stages can be traced in Mr. Yeats' development. First came his early and tentative work when he was writing under the influence of models and seeking a path of his own ; this was followed by the well-defined symbolism of *The Wind Among the Reeds*, 'Rosa Alchemica' and *Ideas of Good and Evil ;* and, lastly, the symbolic manner has, in some of the plays, been brought into closer contact with everyday life.

The first two stages of the development here sketched are more clearly illustrated in Mr. Yeats' prose than in his verse. The editing of older stories naturally led him to attempt prose-fiction, and in 1891 he made a beginning with two tales, *John Sherman* and *Dhoya*. Neither of these is singularly promising. The first is a creditable study of character set against a background of contemporary life in a country town of Sligo ; the second is a myth story, derivative in its manner and betraying little of that sensitiveness which belongs to his later work. In *The Celtic Twilight* (1893) are collected essays drawn from the associations of the author's early life and his acquaintance with the peasantry of Ireland, especially

of County Sligo. The volume contains stories, sketches, accounts of superstitions and visions of people of the faëry told in a simple and exquisite prose of limited vocabulary. And the *Stories of Red Hanrahan* (1904) are tales of a similar character, grouped about the central personality of Hanrahan, the hedge schoolmaster. The esoteric mood of Mr. Yeats is fully pronounced in the wholly mystical *Secret Rose* (1897) and *The Tables of the Law* (1897). 'Rosa Alchemica,' the longest and most striking story in the first volume, appeared in *The Savoy*, as did *The Tables of the Law*. In the latter we note that convention and petrifaction of symbolism which marks the decadence of a spiritual faith into a dogmatic mythology. The tendency to fossilise symbols is carried over into Mr. Yeats' most distinctive book of literary and artistic criticism, *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903), a title typically borrowed from Blake. And this progressive tendency toward the stereotyping of mystical ideas may be traced from Mr. Yeats' early and simple lyrics through *The Wind Among the Reeds*, and *In the Seven Woods* to *The Green Helmet*.

The atmosphere of Mr. Yeats' mysticism has often been attributed as much to the influence of Maeterlinck as to Irish myth and folk-lore; but the attribution appears to have little basis in fact. It argues nothing to speak of the melancholy of either writer, the inward happiness, the passionate sympathy with the lonely and mysterious lot of man, the consciousness of unreality in the visible world, for these have been common to mystics of all ages. A parallelism may be discovered in that both writers are products of the civilisation of modern cities, who seek amid the refinements of external life to cultivate a nebulous haven of peace in a vague and metaphysical region. But *The Wanderings of Oisin* and *The Countess Cathleen* had been written or conceived before the work of Maeterlinck was known on this side of the channel; and, thus early, the twilight outline common to both writers was fully developed; and, on the other hand, Mr. Yeats does not cultivate the artifice of the shadowy and unknown terror which pervades the work of the author of *Les Aveugles* and *La Mort de Tintagiles*. If Maeterlinck counts for little, it may fairly be doubted

whether the later mysticism of Mr. Yeats would ever have come into being save for the influence of the French symbolists, Rimbaud, Villiers de l'Isle Adam and Théodore de Banville. Nor must the influence of Blake, whose works Mr. Yeats has, in conjunction with Mr. E. J. Ellis, edited, be forgotten. Blake's mysticism is, however, despite his soaring imagination, often simple and homely. The family scenes in the illustrations to the book of Job are emblematic of his mind. In Mr. Yeats enters the tinge of aristrocratic aloofness from common life, a trait which belongs to his temper, in which also he found a companion in Villiers de l'Isle Adam, from whom he quotes often the saying, " As for living our servants will do that for us." Celtic legend, Oriental tale, Blake and the French Symbolists, all these have contributed to the formation of Mr. Yeats' vision of life over and above the natural endowment of his mind; for, as Mr. George Moore in his last apostasy and disillusion has pointed out, his inspiration visits him from literature, not life. As clearly as his brother, Mr. Jack B. Yeats, draws the inspiration of his painting from life, not art, as clearly as Synge discovered the supreme interest not in books but in living men and the spoken word, so clearly does Mr. Yeats breathe only in the atmosphere of intellectual and literary concepts. And in this characteristic, at least, Mr. Yeats is the fellow of M. Maeterlinck.

Mr. Yeats' earliest lyrics are not peculiarly distinctive of his genius, and they betray little kinship with the fully developed mysticism of his later poems. He had not then learned, in Blake's words, to see " through not with the eye " ; and one of these early poems, ' The Song of the Happy Shepherd,' with its question whether the thirst of knowledge and hunger of truth may be but misleading impulses and all truth be found in the heart, indicates a hesitating and experimental stage of thought. The early poems which borrow from Hindoo mysticism are lacking in the poet's individual manner; but ' The Madness of King Goll ' contains the hint of the future poet of Celtic mysticism. And besides this there are poems, like ' The Ballad of Father O'Hart ' and ' Moll Magee,' which touch Irish life in a vein of simple pathos. But finer far than ' Father O'Hart ' is ' The Ballad of Father Gilligan,'

which in its choice of subject illustrates the development of the mystical reading of life in Mr. Yeats' mind. In the earlier poem the keening of the birds for Father O'Hart scarcely carries us away from the setting of the fairy tale. In 'Father Gilligan' the story of the priest who nods asleep in his chair through weariness when he should be consoling the last hours of a dying parishioner is raised to a plane far above the conventional. The old priest wakes and rides through the night to find that he is late, but God has been before sending one of his angels to minister the last rites. And the old man kneels to whisper,

> "He who is wrapped in purple robes,
> With planets in his care,
> Had pity on the least of things
> Asleep upon a chair."

But it is in the single volume of *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) that Mr. Yeats reaches his finest and most original work in shorter lyrics. These mystical broodings of spirit lie outside the highway of poetry, and, though not untouched by the sophistries of the cultured world, they are as unintelligible to the common mind as the arcana of Blake. Yet Mr. Yeats has lived more among men than Blake, he has more of the wisdom of the children of this world, and he is not guiltless of conscious artifice where Blake would have been wholly natural and without self-consciousness. Among those poems directly founded upon Irish legend 'The Old Age of Queen Maeve' is noteworthy for its epic note and the cadences of its blank verse, and its melody brings it into sharp contrast with 'Baille and Aillinn,' another poem founded upon Irish legend, written in rhyming octosyllables which suffer from a tendency to jostling haste. Perhaps the most beautiful poems of the volume are 'The Host of the Air,' 'Into the Twilight' and 'The Song of Wandering Ængus.' 'The Host of the Air' has that incommunicable magic of prosody making, as in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' and 'Kubla Khan,' pure poetry for its own sake. The poem which tells how in dreaming vision O'Driscoll saw—

> " . . . young men and young girls
> Who danced on a level place,
> And Bridget his bride among them,
> With a sad and a gay face."

and how—

> " The dancers crowded about him,
> And many a sweet thing said,
> And a young man brought him red wine
> And a young girl white bread."

considered only as prosody does not come short of Mr. Yeats' better known poem, ' The Lake Isle of Innisfree.'

The year 1899 not only saw the publication of *The Wind Among the Reeds*, it found the poet busied with the workings of the Irish Literary Theatre, and it marked a point of rapid declination in Mr. Yeats' lyric powers. *In the Seven Woods* (1903) contains no poetry as individual as the preceding volume, though it includes the stirring stanzas of ' Red Hanrahan's Song,' a poem which, with splendid imagery of clouds, winds, yellow pools and flooding waters, breathes the love of Ireland's bare hills, bog waters and warm soft rain. Other songs, however, ' O do not love too long ' and ' Never Give All the Heart,' for example, suggest purely English and Elizabethan rather than Celtic models. The short series of love poems printed in *The Green Helmet* (1910) are metaphysical and not very distinctive.

If not with the short lyric, with poems of a different kind Mr. Yeats has shown himself the poet of an esoteric beauty in a character and a manner that is all his own. Further *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), *The Countess Cathleen* (1892) and *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), poems in dialogue, may be regarded as the prelude to Mr. Yeats' phase as a dramatic poet. The first version of *The Wanderings of Oisin*, compared with the revised text which Mr. Yeats subsequently printed, was a youthful and diffuse poem. Often weak in style, it was also far from consistently happy in phrase or imagery. In its later guise Mr. Yeats' first long essay in verse has become a poem of a beauty and distinction that is rare. It is in form derived from the Middle Irish dialogues of St. Patrick and Oisin, and represents the mythic hero relating to the saint the story of his wanderings in the

paradises of pagan mythology and his passionate love of Niam. It may be noted that contrasts of paganism and Christianity, which appear thus early, are of frequent recurrence in Mr. Yeats' poetry. The saint warns Oisin to repent lest his soul be lost

> "Through the demon love of its youth and its godless and passionate age."

But a pale and bloodless creed has no power over the soul of Oisin: he hopes to join the Fenian heroes, his comrades of old time, even though they be tost on the floor of hell.

> "I will go to Caolte, and Conan, and Bran, Sgeolan, Lomair,
> And dwell in the house of the Fenians, be they in flames or at feast."

The most striking characteristic of this early poem is that curious impression of the supernatural which Mr. Yeats can convey in narrative verse with a power and a magic that is beyond the reach of any other English-writing poet. Many have striven to give the poetry of myth and legend the atmosphere of the eerie and otherworldly, Mr. Yeats achieves it to a quite extraordinary degree. Others may labour for a time to divest themselves of the trappings of externality; the poetry of Mr. Yeats is a poetry of dreams more true than the things seen with the physical eye. Mere study of technique in verse melody or in diction scarcely serves to explain how this effect is gained; but, as Swinburne snatches from the air music which haunts the memory, though we recall no thought nor even a clear image, so in the poetry of Mr. Yeats we are caught up into the kingdom of faëry as Niam carried Oisin to the land where "days pass like a wayward time."

The Land of Heart's Desire is closely united in mood and atmosphere with *The Wanderings of Oisin.* It also is imbued with the paganism of older Ireland, and it has to do "with vast and shadowy activities and with the great impersonal emotions." The poem, with its graceful and tender story of one who was snatched by the fairies to the land

> "Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,
> But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song,"

is an altogether beautiful and almost perfect piece of writing. *The Countess Cathleen* is broadly contrasted with these two poems, for it is Christian in spirit and treats of the moral emotions. It narrates the fortunes of the Countess who sells her soul to demons in order to gain money to help the poor in time of famine. Yet her soul is accepted in heaven, for

> "The Light of Lights
> Looks always on the motive, not the deed,
> The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone."

The handling of the blank verse, even in the latest version of *The Countess Cathleen*, is not always competent, and in this respect the poem, for beauty and melody of verse, will not compare with *The Shadowy Waters*. But it reflects skill in the use of epithets and proper names —Balor, Cailtin, Sualtam, Dectara—always an ornament of English blank verse since the time of Milton. And Mr. Yeats does not fail to give dramatic unity to *The Countess Cathleen*, not by any interplay of passion and emotion directed to an end, but by a sustained and unfaltering poetic intensity.

These poems are dramatic only in form: essentially they are lyrics written in dialogue, though *The Land of Heart's Desire* was a sufficient success upon the stage to be played at the Avenue Theatre for six weeks in 1894. From the first, however, dramatic writing has been near to the poet's heart, and, when opportunity arose with the foundation of the Irish Theatre, Mr. Yeats turned to the composition of drama written both in verse and prose. But of all his work in the last eighteen years it can only be said that it illustrates a weaker dramatic gift than that possessed by other lyric poets of the century—Tennyson, Shelley, Beddoes, for example. His plays are undramatic, for they move in a shadowy world of vague symbols; and in the effort to reach the highest plane of the poetic art, the rendering in dramatic speech of great poetry, he is, save in isolated passages, less a poet than in the long lyrics in dialogue and the short lyrics of *The Wind Among the Reeds*. Several of the dramas are in prose and may more fitly be named in another chapter with the work of the Irish playwrights, and even here the

verse dramas need only be characterised briefly, for as poems they are less than the work of Mr. Yeats' earlier years.

According to Mr. Yeats he contemplated from boyhood the story of *The Shadowy Waters* (1900), and the poem, much changed when staged in 1904, represents the fruit of many years of musing upon and retouching an age-old theme—the quest of the soul's desire. Forgael, dissatisfied with earthly love, sails in search of that land where love is imperishable. The poet's long preoccupation with the tale explains not only the wistful dreaminess of the drama but further the beautiful cadence of the blank verse, which is the best Mr. Yeats has written. In *On Baile's Strand* (1903) prose and verse are combined in the telling of the widely diffused story of the father who inadvertently slays his son. And, thrown into contrast with the heroic legend of Cuchulain, Mr. Yeats introduces roughspun humour in the figures of the Fool and the Blind Man. But the welding of the two is unskilful; and, all in all, the action is a little awkward and the drama unnecessarily lengthy for the working out of its theme. Compared with these *The King's Threshold* (1904) and *The Green Helmet* (1910) are slight and occasional. The latter, written in rhyming fourteeners, is described as heroic farce, and though it may please with its curious mingling of the startling, fantastic and heroic in a single act, it can only give pleasure by an effect other than dramatic. *Deirdre* (1907), which was successfully produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, is less mystical and more dramatic than *The Shadowy Waters;* and, though Mr. Yeats' setting of the story is weaker than the fine version of Synge, the theme lends itself to dramatic treatment and the author has not elsewhere handled a tragic story with equal strength. In moments of great crisis, as the Greek and Elizabethan dramatists understood, men and women speak impersonally with a cadence of universal meaning. In *Deirdre* Mr. Yeats realised this truth; and not a few splendid passages of great impersonal speech remain in the memory after reading the poem. And thus, as also is the case with Synge's play, Mr. Yeats' treatment of the *Deirdre* story is not peculiarly Irish. In illustration of the statement that the verse of *Deirdre*

is written upon the model of Elizabethan drama a passage may be quoted from one of Deirdre's speeches :

> " Oh, singing women, set it down in a book
> That love is all we need, even though it is
> But the last drops we gather up like this;
> And though the drops are all we have known of life,
> For we have been most friendless—praise us for it
> And praise the double sunset, for nought's lacking,
> But a good end to the long, cloudy day."

To the national and literary enthusiasm aroused by the Irish Theatre is due a large part of the strongest and most imaginative work of Irish writers in the past fifteen years ; and not a little of the modern drama of Ireland is indirectly attributable to Mr. Yeats. But in his own person he has contributed nothing of importance to drama ; what value his plays possess lies in their poetry and not in any dramatic quality. Nearly every lyric poet of the last century deviated for a time into dramatic writing ; yet Shelley's *Cenci* remains the greatest achievement of the century in poetic drama, and this is better read in the study, indeed almost impossible on the stage. The nineteenth century saw no great poetic drama ; and Mr. Yeats has not succeeded where many have failed. The failure was inevitable, for even in prose his dramatic writing is not comparable to that of several living writers of his country. It cannot be known whether in his effort to write drama he checked his lyric faculty or whether his native gifts were already on the wane when he adopted the dramatic form; but, whatever the cause, Mr. Yeats' finest work as a poet belongs to ten or eleven years, from 1889 to 1899. In the three long lyric dialogues of this period and the shorter poems of *The Wind Among the Reeds* is contained a body of poetry unique of its kind in the present generation. They set the writer apart as *the* poet of Celtic myth and dream. The poetry of A. E., though it has a greatness in simplicity lacking in the poetry of more complex emotions significant of Mr. Yeats' character, is by no means entirely typical of those traits associated with the Celtic temper. His poems are hortatory, joyous and optimistic; and A. E. can sometimes exult almost with the abandon to life of Whitman. His love

of his land is not with the wistful dreaminess of the Celt, but with gladness and strong hope.

The work of A. E. as a poet is neither large in content nor greatly diversified in matter. *Homeward*, his first collection, appeared in 1894, and each of the succeeding small volumes repeated poems from earlier collections, till the whole was gathered in *Collected Poems* (1913). Nor does A. E. betray any peculiar skill in diction, rhythm and metre, for his vocabulary is narrow, and his metrical experiments are usually of the simplest and follow the standards set by Tennyson or Swinburne. He has a liking for long anapæstic measures, and with these, where few have been entirely successful, he does not fail. In melody he is, perhaps, at his best with anapæsts. Nor, again, do we often meet in his verse with the inspired and magical phrase which lingers unforgettable in the memory. To art he owes little (though he seldom offends in technique): but his slender volumes carry with them the soul of poetry in their rapture, their spiritual exaltation, their glad consciousness of kinship between the mind of man and the moods of earth. By his admirers he has been called a great poet; the praise must be denied him if it means that he is to be counted with the supreme poets of the world. In gift of song and in range of thought and vision A. E. has plain limitations. The recurring *motif* of many of the poems —the unity of conscious life in the universe—may tend to weariness in the end. And this constant theme shows that his inspiration has come to him not through the broad channels of English poetry, but from pagan Ireland, the Bhagavad Gîta, the Upanishads and the mystics of all ages. The most personal of his poems are those which sing, in the gladness of a pantheistic faith, the joy and melancholy of the grey woods, the upturned soil, the deeps of the sky and the far reaches of the sombre sea. In poems of men and women he may be purely imitative.

A. E., George W. Russell, b. 1867.

"From the heat that melts together oft a rarer essence slips,
And our hearts may still be parted at the meeting of the lips"—

resembles in image and phrase the weaker manner of Tennyson or Moore. Merely pretty lines, however, sur-

prise us by their unlikeness to his true character as a poet.

Mr. Yeats has addressed A. E. as "the one poet of modern Ireland who has moulded a spiritual ecstasy in verse," and described his poems as revealing "in all things a kind of scented flame consuming them from within." No other words could as well state the essential character of the poet and his work. In the beauty and power of a spiritual fervour no poetry of to-day, not that of Francis Thompson, has the skiey light and depth of the work of A. E. The ideas of a pantheistic philosophy are in all his poems; for him there is no gulf fixed between the physical and the spiritual; the beauty of the land of heart's desire is wreathed with the sombre hues of earth.

"And one thing after another
Was whispered out of the air,
How God was a big, kind brother
Whose home is in everywhere.

His light like a smile comes glancing
Through the cool, cool winds as they pass,
From the flowers in heaven dancing
To the stars that shine in the grass.

From the clouds in deep blue wreathing
And most from the mountains tall,
But God like a wind goes breathing
A dream of Himself in all."

The joyous faith is repeated in the musings of 'The Earth Breath,' 'The Dream of the Children,' 'In the Womb,' 'The Gates of Dreamland' and 'The Twilight of Earth.' Earth is a never-failing source of inspiration to the poetry of A. E. He never writes with higher fervour and exaltation than of the mother-earth whence we are sprung.

"I, thy child who went forth radiant
In the golden prime,
Find thee still the mother-hearted
Through my night in time;
Find in thee the old enchantment
There behind the veil
Where the gods, my brothers, linger,
Hail, forever, hail!"

Not only is A. E. a poet—he is a painter, a critic, a public speaker, the chief worker of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. And whatever the task to which he sets himself he carries into it a mystic and spiritual enthusiasm. But he is first a poet, and a poet who has, despite the limitation of some monotony in thought and *motif*, a splendour of colour, a glow of faith, and a soul-uplifted anticipation in which Mrs. Woods and Mr. Herbert Trench alone among living poets may sometimes be counted in the same fellowship with him. It is a fact noteworthy and of significance that Ireland can produce in a single generation two poets of such manifest and high genius, who betray parallelisms yet differ so far in thought and method, as Mr. W. B. Yeats and A. E. The elusive rhythms, the esotericism, the wistfulness of Mr. Yeats are exchanged in A. E. for a powerful spiritual exaltation. In either case we have a vision of life ceaselessly poetical.

On A. E. and Mr. Yeats the gift of poetic genius has been bestowed in full measure, and in the work of other singers of modern Ireland it is but incidentally that we meet with a poem of greater inspiration. It would be hard to rate above its value Dr. Douglas Hyde's work for Irish nationalism and literature; but he is to be counted with the scholars and translators. Outside his own country he is best known by his *Literary History of Ireland* (1899); in Ireland he is loved as the author of Gaelic poems and plays; and in the older language he has chosen to write the greater part of his creative work. It must not, however, be forgotten that in his *Love Songs of Connacht* (1894) and *Religious Songs of Connacht* (1906) he reveals himself as a translator of fine literary attainment, and with these translations he has greatly influenced the English style of other writers in the Irish movement.

Douglas Hyde, b. 1860.

The Irish origin claimed by Lionel Pigot Johnson was a literary affectation, and he is only loosely to be counted with the poets of modern Ireland. He received a good classical education; Winchester, Oxford and London formed the background of his life; and the impulse to write came to him through

Lionel Pigot Johnson, 1867–1902.

the highways of Greek, Latin and English literature. Johnson was a widely and wisely read man. At school he early displayed an interest in literature; and after he went up to New College, Oxford, in 1886, the chief influences upon his prose style were Samuel Johnson and Walter Pater, a conjunction of names not so curious, perhaps, as at first it appears. From Oxford he went to London, and soon became reviewer to a number of periodicals. He had long been out of sympathy with the Anglicanism in which he had been educated, and in 1891 he was received into the Church of Rome. From this point in his life Catholic tradition together with a love of Ireland, which he adopted to himself, became the primary influences upon his work and poetry. Unfortunately these better influences were checked by the growing habit of intemperance to which was due his early death in 1902.

Lionel Johnson had little gift of unpremeditated song. He was the maker of chiselled verses composed in the rhythms of a vocabulary borrowed from Latin, though he never wove so elaborate and gorgeous a brocade of Latinisms as Francis Thompson. His two volumes of verse, *Poems* (1895) and *Ireland with Other Poems* (1897), reflect a mind illumined by the familiar knowledge of great poetry. For so habitual a quoter in writing prose, in verse he has singularly few direct borrowings from classical or contemporary poetry. His chief themes are the peaceful solitudes of moor and woodland, the companionship of books, Ireland, the purity and mystic tradition of Catholic asceticism. His note is often elegiac, many of the poems have a note of restrained melancholy, and, on the other hand, the splendid 'Sancta Silvarum' and other nature poems reveal a spirit of conscious joy in the mystery of life and the beauty of the universe. His verse is often ornate, mannered and stiff; but, as in the delightful lines addressed to Charles Lamb, he can be tender, simple and unaffected. In his more ambitious manner 'The Dark Angel' is distinguished by the passionate sincerity of its thought and an unfaltering strength in utterance. But it is in the moments, all too rare, of simplicity without artifice, that we recognise the true poet repressed by Johnson's wide learning and the critical

instinct fostered by his erudition. 'The Precept of Silence,' a short and faultlessly beautiful poem, is the best example he has left of spontaneous and emotional poetry.

"I know you: solitary griefs,
Desolate passions, aching hours!
I know you: tremulous beliefs,
Agonised hopes, and ashen flowers!

The winds are sometimes sad to me;
The starry spaces full of fear:
Mine is the sorrow on the sea,
And mine the sigh of places drear.

Some players upon plaintive strings
Publish their wistfulness abroad:
I have not spoken of these things,
Save to one man and unto God."

But Johnson rarely wrote as simply as this. His poetry reveals a mind secluded, sensitive, fine, loving the beautiful things that are not of a day but for all time, rather than the genius of the born poet. His real power is better seen in that admirable study, *The Art of Thomas Hardy* (1894), and the miscellaneous critical essays published under the title of *Post Liminium* (1911).

John Millington Synge, 1871–1909.

Synge was not only the greatest dramatist of the Irish Theatre, but one of the greatest dramatists who has written in English. His poetry was a minor occupation with him and does not call for much comment. It was his belief that most modern poetry had withdrawn itself from human and ordinary things and that "before verse can be human again it must learn to be brutal." To begin with a theory of life and poetry is not often a happy event; but only one or two of Synge's poems can be regarded as pattern pieces. 'The 'Mergency Man' and 'Danny,' as exercises upon the theory are so far interesting, and the best in verse that Synge has left behind him. Of interest also as experiments are his translations from Petrarch and Villon into the prose idiom of his dramas. But Synge, the poet, contains no suggestion of the real greatness of the man.

Of Mr. Padraic Colum it may also be said that in dramatic writing he has been able to express himself more fully than in verse. A few of his poems appeared in *New Songs* (1904), an anthology from younger Irish poets selected by A. E., and in 1907 he published *Wild Earth*, a separate volume of verse. Not all the poems of this volume flow simply and naturally, and some are of the order of made poetry. His talent is chiefly lyrical, but Mr. Padraic Colum is ambitious, and he attempts in one of his finest poems 'The Plougher,' the manner of the greater ode.

Padraic Colum.

"Slowly the darkness falls, the broken lands blend with the savage;
The brute-tamer stands by the brutes, a head's breadth only above them,
A head's breadth? Ay, but therein is hell's depth and the height up to heaven,
And the thrones of the gods and their halls, their chariots, purples and splendours."

This is not only one of his most ambitious, but also one of his most successful poems. For the most part he is content to write more simply of the joy of life and earth, or with pain and sadness, as in that pathetic little description, in 'An Old Woman of the Roads,' of the wandering beggar woman who yearns wistfully for her own cottage with its bed, its clock, its "shining delph" and warm hearthside. For Mr. Colum has a fine gift of description in a few apt words. Without the expenditure of a single unnecessary word 'Across the Door' paints the whole scene of a dance and a kiss in the dark night.

Finer work and greater promise may be found in Mr. James Stephens' *Insurrections* (1909) and *The Hill of Vision* (1912). The poems contained in these volumes scarcely at all reflect the ideals of younger Irish writers, for Mr. Stephens is the individual rebel who comes out against the thrones, dominations and powers of the universe, not as an affectation, but because he is young and dissatisfied with a world that does not reach his expectations. The verses of *Insurrections* are

James Stephens, b. 1882.

nearer to the more crude and vigorous poems of Synge than to the work of other poets in the Irish group. But, as a poet, Mr. Stephens has a higher gift than Synge. In 'The Chill of Eve' he can write a merely pretty and conventional piece, but it is refreshing, in the wastes of minor verse of our day, to come upon poems like 'The Street behind Yours,' 'Fifty Pounds a Year and a Pension' or 'Where the Demons Grin,' in which Mr. Stephens is discontented. In these, and in the first volume in general, there are traces of the influence of Browning and the *Wessex Poems* of Mr. Thomas Hardy, but little enough of the Irish literary movement, unless it be Synge. Mr. Stephens seeks no graces, nor is slang abomination to him, but he nearly always expresses something and expresses it vigorously. In 'The Optimist' he interprets afresh the old invitation, "All ye that labour, come to me, and rest," and in itself it offers a summary of the philosophy contained in these poems.

> "Let ye be still, ye tortured ones, nor strive
> Where striving's futile. Ye can ne'er attain
> To lay your burdens down. All things alive
> Must bear the woes of life, and if the pain
> Be more than ye can bear, then ye must die."

Mr. Stephens is neither pessimist nor despondent weakling. He has looked at the worst and gladly remains an optimist. The long ode, 'A Prelude and a Song,' with which his second volume opens, is animated by a confident joy in living. It is a fine and imaginative piece of writing, moving in clear and continuous, if irregular rhythms. Admirable also are some of the short poems descriptive of Irish character; and especially apt and vigorous among pieces of this kind is 'Danny Murphy.' And almost perfect in simplicity of thought, restraint and frankness is 'Afterwards'—the newly wed wife's lament for lost maidenhood. Mr. Stephens is a young poet who comes with the promise of still better things. To the gift of vigour he adds a vivid, daring and singularly original imaginative faculty, reflected in an almost equal degree in his verse and in his unique prose book, *The Crock of Gold.*

Other Irish poets of to-day can hardly be named save

with even greater brevity, for they may be regarded as deriving from the literary enthusiasm of Dublin in recent years, and their work shows less trace of clear and definite individuality. 'John Eglinton' (Mr. W. K. Magee) and Mr. Charles Weekes are mystic poets in the following of A. E. and Mr. W. B. Yeats. Mr. James H. Cousins is a prolific writer, and has, at least, half a dozen volumes of verse to his credit besides textbooks for schools. His sonnets and other poems in various metres have the merit of simplicity. But his verse has no magic and little music, and is the fruit of good literary intention rather than talent. Mr. Thomas Keohler is the author of verse in the anthology, *New Songs*, and he has also printed the *Songs of a Devotee* (1906), a title which indicates the pietistic mood of his writing. Dr. George Sigerson and Seumas MacCathmhaoil may also be mentioned with the lesser Irish poets. On the other hand, save for a few poems we should scarcely suspect Mr. Seumas O'Sullivan of writing from Ireland. His inspiration springs from a knowledge of good literature; his verse, pensive and brooding without being weak or dilettante, is sustained by careful craftsmanship; and his poems reflect a thoughtful and well-ordered mind. Mr. O'Sullivan has no affectation of startling originality, yet he is rarely wholly commonplace.

CHAPTER III

IRISH POETESSES

Jane Barlow—'Moira O'Neill'—Eva Gore-Booth—Alice Milligan—Ella Young—Nora Hopper—Katharine Tynan—Dora Sigerson Shorter.

In latter years Ireland has given birth to a larger number than England of women who reach a creditable level of poetic attainment, although, with one or two exceptions, the prevalence of effusive sentiment and carelessly fluent versification is a shortcoming characteristic of the Irish poetesses. In the case of those who have fallen under the spell of the modern Irish school of writers the influence is little more than superficial and scarcely serves to bring them within the main current of a national consciousness. The Irish in everyday life are as practical a people as any in the British Isles. Dublin is a city wholly given over to practical affairs, government, social functions, politics, active commerce and academic education. The very religion of Ireland is immeasurably more definite and clear than that bewildered phantasmagoria of ideas which does service for religion in the mind of most Englishmen. The battle of a hundred sects has convinced the English that religion is an indefinite quantity and uncertain in notation : real Ireland is the home of one dogmatic and institutional religion with tenets unmistakable to the meanest intellect. The Celtic and the Latin races adopt an institutional view of life, the Greek and Teutonic an indefinite and philosophic ; and for this reason the mystic genius flourishes among the Celts and Latins, because the background of life is for them immovably fixed and secure. Mysticism is the child of rigid and unbending dogma. In the atmosphere of Catholicism or Calvinism mystics have been born and lived full of honours ; in the many Protestant sects, where the creeds have lost their backbone, mysticism has as consistently declined.

For it is only when a man is not in doubt about his soul that he can let free his wayward dreams to rove: if he is uncertain and tries to understand his universe by processes of ratiocination he is without the happy confidence needful to the mystic. The Celt is practical by instinct and begins by making sure of the immortalities, and he is therefore free to be a dreamer and an artist; the Teuton, never wholly convinced of the unseen, resolves his dreams into adventurous action, and he is therefore greater, even as an artist, than the Celt. The Irish poets and poetesses, whether or not they subscribe to the religion of their country are of it, and, with few exceptions, mystics and dreamers.

And further the Celt, more primitive and less sophisticated than the Teuton, is enchained in imagination and memory to the places where he was born. The Teutonic is one of the newest of races with but little historic tradition rooting its homing instincts to small areas; and English poetry long since began to think imperially. Celtic poetry clings to the little margins of the earth. And thus a large part of Celtic and Irish poetry either springs from impulses that are not of the things seen and temporal, or it is inspired by a wistful love of familiar hills and valleys. And these two aspects of Irish poetry merge and flow into each other. "Facts," wrote Meredith, "work on the Celtic mind in its imaginative exercise like the flame of a lamp crossing the eyelids of a sleeper." In other words the Irish imagination is moved by the spirituality of life's external incident; the temporal event is of no value save as figurative of human emotions, pains and joys.

Jane Barlow, b. 1860.

Miss Jane Barlow only serves to illustrate one aspect of the twofold responsiveness of the Irish imagination when working in poetry. The people and the soil of Ireland as they are to-day, neither its dreams nor its legendary past, are the groundwork of her writing. In style and approach to Irish life she belongs to the older convention, not to the school of Mr. Yeats, J. M. Synge and Lady Gregory. She has more affinity with Lever, Lover and Mangan. In her poems there is little or nothing of mystic and personal ecstasy, if more truth and sin-

cerity than in much of the hot-house mysticism of younger Irish poets of to-day. Although Miss Barlow is better known as a writer of short stories and novels she has published in verse *Bogland Studies* (1891) and *The Mockers* (1908). The first volume contains seven long dialect poems written in anapæstic measure. Throughout we are conscious of a scholarly and reflective mind, which does not intrude itself but looks clearly and simply on life and is imbued with a genuine sympathy for men and women. The volume of 1908 opens with two poems written in the same metre and in the same narrative manner, and includes furthermore poems of a more purely lyrical character. Sometimes in shorter poems, like the sonnet, 'A Last Lesson,' or in the elegiac 'On Lisnadara,' Miss Barlow can write poetry that is uncommon and distinctive; but she is in the greater part of her verse-writing a literary poet and not a poet of inspiration. What she has to tell in verse could, as a rule, be told as well or better in prose; but her narrative poems are tuneful, they have energy and movement, and there is never any smallness in her writing. She knows how to touch the humour and pathos of everyday life without sentimentalism, and life's nobler implications are always present to her thought.

Moira O'Neill.

Moira O'Neill's (Mrs. Skrine) lyric poems of Irish peasant life are of a different and far higher order. She is remembered by a slender volume, *Songs of the Glens of Antrim* (1900), containing twenty-five short poems written in the dialect of the Antrim glens. Moira O'Neill's heart was with men and women of the soil; if she sings of nature it is of nature seen through the unsophisticated vision of the peasant. For objective or metaphysical abstractions she cares little. These poems are at once dramatic in their representation of differing types of peasant life and intensely subjective. They are sometimes gay with a note of "divilment," but melancholy is never far absent. When not remotely spiritual Irish poetry reflects drink, sport and boisterous diversions or the sadness of an oppressed and struggling race. Lever and Lover have long been dead, and the world only sings drinking-songs as at a religious function in which

it has ceased to believe. And Irish poetry has the melancholy of modern disillusion. Moira O'Neill's songs are poems of exile, regret or longing, expressed in the speech and with the thought of the simple folk of the land, but of a Celtic people who naturally utter their thoughts to the accompaniment of poetical imagery and see the common events of their rough lives in the light of a poetical vision. The beautiful 'Corrymeela,' the plaint of an Irish harvester in England, is now well known, and hardly less simple and true in humanity and pathos are 'The Boy from Ballytearm' and 'A Song of Glennan.' In the poetry of A. E. the love of Irish soil is a spiritual exaltation, a strong fervour, with Moira O'Neill it is a pensive and wistful mood. In 'A Song of Glennan' the labourer torn from his native place utters his thoughts and regrets:

"But since we come away from there
An' far across the say,
I still have wrought an' still have thought
The way I'm doin' the day.

An' now we're quarely better fixed,
In troth! there's nothin' wrong:
But me an' mine, by rain an' shine
We do be thinkin' long."

The utter simplicity of the words and thoughts touch the very heart of human regret as surely as does Swinburne in his 'Jacobite Exile.' And the psychological truthfulness of the poem is noteworthy. In the home glens of Antrim the peasant accepted unthinkingly the accidents of his life—

"The weary wind might take the roof,
The rain might lay the corn;
We'd up and look for better luck
About the morrow's morn."

But across the sea in a strange land he meets and succumbs to the spirit of the modern world—the questioning mood.

In recent years Ireland has produced no singer of the simple life of the people gifted with so rare and fine a genius as Moira O'Neill. By virtue of the simple dignity and strength of her art she takes her place but little

below Mr. W. B. Yeats and A. E., the two chief poets of the Irish literary group. Her lyrics are the product of unforced poetic genius; her gaiety, her melancholy and sense of tragedy are entirely inevitable and natural; and she has a happy gift of individualising character in song. She has also written a novel, *An Easter Vacation* (1893), and a shorter tale, *The Elf-errant* (1895), but it is by her poetry that she is and will be remembered.

Eva Gore-Booth.

No poetess has reflected more beautifully than Moira O'Neill the love of Irish soil; no Irish poetess possesses in equal measure with Miss Eva Gore-Booth the genius of mystic knowledge and insight. The first volume of *Poems* (1898) revealed scarcely anything of her real power. As a metrist she wrote without difficulty or effort, but beyond a slight tendency to wistfulness and melancholy there was nothing to mark the Celtic strain in her work. On the other hand some of these poems are incisive, even realistic and satirical. One poem, 'Finger Posts,' reveals the deep-seated mysticism of Miss Gore-Booth's mind. And the common and prevailing characteristic of all her later volumes, including the poetic drama of *The Sorrowful Princess* (1907), is a mystic vision of life's spiritual significance. This is most clearly seen in her second, and still the best of her volumes, *The One and the Many* (1904), in which under differing aspects and in separate sequences of poems the resolution of life's incongruities is found in the one dream and hope. The thought of this volume is quickened with a mystical and optimistic faith. Neither as a poetess nor as a mystic does Miss Gore-Booth lean only upon her emotions, trusting to the heart divorced from the intellect, like many of her Irish sisters. She is a student: her poems reflect the thought of Porphyry, Heraclitus, Plato, Plotinus, Paracelsus. She does not, like Mr. W. B. Yeats, nourish her soul chiefly on the spiritual heritage of the Irish race. She goes far afield; and her poems reflect a mind which has made the mysticism of the world a living part of its imaginative faculty. The influence of the Irish literary movement and the legendary tales of Ireland is traceable in the dramatic poems, *Unseen Kings* (1904) and *The Triumph of Mæve* (1905);

and among shorter lyrics the exquisite 'Little Waves of Breffny,' owes its inspiration to the love of Ireland; but it is in her mystical volumes, in *The One and the Many* and the shorter poems of *The Three Resurrections* (1905), that Miss Gore-Booth most surely finds her voice. There is no suspicion of a desire to shirk reality nor any suggestion of intellectual weakness in her thought, mystical and obscure as it may seem to many readers. Furthermore, the technical quality of her poetry is admirable, and she writes with an inborn gift for choosing the perfect phrase. The wistful love of homeland and the dreamy spirituality of the Celt are severally illustrated in the poetry of Moira O'Neill and Miss Eva Gore-Booth with greater power and beauty than in any other Irish poetesses of to-day.

Alice Milligan.

Miss Alice Milligan and Miss Ella Young are also poetesses to be counted with the rank and file of the Irish literary renascence. Miss Milligan's poems, contained in *Hero Lays* (1908), are often of a ringing and patriotic character. She writes in long lines and with an easy rhythm more reminiscent of masculine than feminine workmanship. 'The Lament of the Dark Daughter' and 'The Defenders of the Ford' are strong and vigorous lays. Miss Milligan always writes with fervour: nearly every poem is inspired by a passionate love of Ireland. In the matter of rhyming and metre she can be careless, her writing lacks any strong and distinctive individuality, but she is more than the mere versifier.

Ella Young, b. 1867.

Miss Ella Young has published a few verses in the anthology, *New Songs*, and in *Poems* (1906), verses that have a tender gracefulness, but are in no wise remarkable.

Nora Hopper, 1871–1906.

The Irish element in the writing of Nora Hopper, Katharine Tynan and Mrs. Dora Sigerson Shorter is accidental rather than considered and deliberate. The group consciousness, when it passes beyond the limits of family, is less likely to kindle the imagination of women than men, and the spirit of a national movement in Irish literature has only touched women writers fitfully. Save for a strain of Celtic sentimentality and the

occasional use of a Hibernian setting or dialect there is little distinctive of race in the volumes of the three poetesses just named. Nora Hopper (Mrs. Wilfrid Hugh Chesson) the most abundantly endowed with poetic genius of the three, writes with truer inspiration of classic theme than of Irish life. In her first volume, *Ballads in Prose* (1894), consisting of Irish folk-stories rendered into English prose, the chief note is Celtic, but in her verse she is more influenced by classic myth and English lyrical song. Many poems in her first volume of verse, *Under Quicken Boughs* (1896), relate to Ireland and its people; but it is in poems of another order, in 'Phæacia' and the truly beautiful and musical 'Nymph's Lament' that she attains to her best. A few lines from the latter will illustrate Nora Hopper's power, though it is to be confessed she seldom wrote so well:

"O, Sister Nymphs, how shall we dance or sing
Remembering
What was and is not? How sing any more
Now Aphrodite's rosy reign is o'er?
For on the forest-floor
Our feet fall wearily the summer long,
The whole year long:
No sudden Goddess through the rushes glides,
No eager God among the laurels hides;
Jove's eagle mopes beside an empty throne,
Persephone and Ades sit alone
By Lethe's hollow shore."

Songs of the Morning (1900) and *Aquamarines* (1902) contain nothing on the same plane. The thought is more conventional, her imagination is weaker, and Nora Hopper's taste has not improved. 'A Woman's Marriage Song' is almost foolishly mawkish. Although she can write in the stronger manner of the earlier volume in 'A Pagan,' 'Ulfhada' and 'The Seaweed-Gatherers,' there is not much to distinguish these volumes from the great mass of miscellaneous verse which continually pours from the press.

Mrs. Chesson always wrote with grace, in that manner which may be described as refined, and her verse was nearly always melodious. But, as is the case with Katharine Tynan, the flow of verse is too easy; there

is a treacherous facility in the expression of little thoughts, little impressions and superficial emotions. She rarely calls for intellectual alertness in the reader, she scarcely ever surprises with the unexpected, and, in equivalence, she does not often sink beneath the level of moderate commendation. *Under Quicken Boughs* is her one distinctive volume, containing poetry of a nobler and more imaginative order.

Katharine Tynan, b. 1861.

Katharine Tynan (Mrs. Hinkson) is never possessed by the moods of stronger inspiration which occasionally visited Nora Hopper. Her earliest volumes, *Louise de Vallière* (1885), *Shamrocks* (1887) and *Ballads and Lyrics* (1891) are disfigured by many lapses in taste and style. The rhymes—" sweeter, glitter, palace, trellis, sward, herd "—are often inexcusable ; and she is sometimes guilty of cacophonies in music and rhythm which go far to ruin a whole poem. ' Rosa Spinosa,' for example, both in content and form rises above the standard of her earlier work, but she damages it irretrievably with the jangle of the closing couplet—

> " Little rose of thorns, come close
> To the heart you stab so, Rose ! "

Many of her poems are songs of childhood and children, pretty and graceful, but not rising above the commonplace in thought or descriptive power. The *Cuckoo Songs* of 1894 showed, however, a distinct advance upon the work of the earlier volumes. Especially beautiful in this volume is ' The Sad Mother,' which rises above Mrs. Hinkson's graceful sentimentality to a note of tragic pathos which is true and deep. And in some of the dialect poems, notably in ' The Train that goes to Ireland,' in *New Poems* (1911), she reaches a higher level than her ordinary manner. But there is little, in general, to distinguish from each other the many volumes of verse she has published. The garden in spring and winter, the birds chirruping, the love of children, pieties and religious observances, these form the staple of Katharine Tynan's verse. There is seldom any strong emotion in thought nor originality in phrase, nor, again, is she the possessor of any personality in style. And with little modification

these observations apply with equal relevance to the poetry of Dora Sigerson (Mrs. Clement Shorter).

Dora Sigerson Shorter.

Mrs. Shorter's poetry is Celtic not only in its moods of melancholy and joyous faith, in its wistful tenderness, but in the incoherence and formlessness which attach to the work of the purely romantic writer. She, like Katherine Tynan and Nora Hopper, had a ready gift of slender song, but of intellectual power there is little evidence and her judgment was untrustworthy. Although she was not ungifted with that power of conciseness which belongs by right to the ballad form, she was often carelessly prolix and indefinite. Nor had she any marked distinction in style. Like many of the Irish poets, from the days of Tom Moore to our own, she wrote English as a language partly foreign to the processes of her thought. Subconsciously she thought in another grammar, and her lapses could be surprising. Further her ear was curiously defective. She sometimes failed to note when she passed from one metre into another; and even in writing common measure she could break down, as the ballad of 'Earl Roderick's Bride' will illustrate. Only too often she suggests a snatching at the first phrases that come to mind, heedless of rhythms and even sequence of thought. Her poetry is a poetry of the emotions in which the intellect plays little part.

Her most characteristic work lies in the ballad form, and if Meredith be right in asserting that the main point of a ballad is "to tell a story metrically," we need feel less distress with Mrs. Shorter's habitual faults than we should in lyric and dramatic poetry. For Mrs. Shorter wrote many ballads which manifest a faculty for sympathy not only with life's emotions and passions, but with its activities and heroic deeds, and in all there is present that consciousness of communion with the unseen world so distinctive of the Celtic temperament. In 1907 the five volumes of verse she had already published were gathered in *Collected Poems:* in 1910 another substantial volume, *The Troubadour and Other Poems*, appeared, and in 1912 *New Poems*. Among the lyrics of these volumes 'Distant Voices,' 'A Vagrant Heart,' 'The Gypsies' Road' and the charming 'Wind on the

Hills ' may be named. In these and other lyrics a wistfulness of unrest and a love of fatherland are the prevailing themes. But it was when she wrote of action, of pathos and tragedy in life, in such poems as ' The Guardian Angels,' ' The Six Sorrows,' ' Jeanne Bras ' and ' A Ballad of Marjorie ' that Mrs. Shorter was at her best. In ' A Ballad of Marjorie ' she reached kinship with the impersonal and moving pathos of old folk-song, while ' The Man who Trod on Sleeping Grass ' is a beautiful ballad in a more modern manner. If the greater part of Mrs. Shorter's writing does not reach a high standard in distinction of content and individuality of style, a few of her ballads and one or two of her lyrics are not easily to be forgotten. Her verse is never enhanced by those sudden and illuminating felicities of phrase and thought which mark greater poetry and occasionally the work of lesser poets ; but, on the other hand, she is not frequently disconcertingly empty of matter and her sentiment rarely degenerates to insipidity.

CHAPTER IV

THE IRISH LITERARY THEATRE

THE importance of the Celtic Revival in Ireland is most marked in the impulse it has aroused toward the composition of literary drama, a drama that may not only be read with pleasure in the library but be acted with success on the stage. .If the work of Synge alone be taken into account, and other Irish dramatists forgotten, this statement still holds true. His plays, however, are not the only work of new power and beauty in this kind which Dublin has sent out in the last quarter of a century. To them must be added the dramatic experiments of Mr. Yeats, A. E., Dr. Hyde, the dialogues and farces of Lady Gregory, and the prose plays of a number of other writers, including Mr. Rutherford Mayne, Mr. Padraic Colum, Mr. Edward Martyn, Mr. William Boyle, Mr. Lennox Robinson, Mr. St. John Ervine. In the few years that have passed since an Irish theatre for Irish plays came into being more good work has been done in Dublin than in London for the production of a drama that can claim to be literature. There are certainly already signs that the stronger and more national inspiration is waning. Mr. Robinson and Mr. Ervine, for example, are falling back into the rut of Ibsen, Hauptmann and Galsworthy, substituting for the greater truth of poetry the make-believe of photographic realism. But it would be rash to prophesy that the Irish playwrights are unlikely to recover their former freshness and individuality. Perhaps Irish drama has only fallen upon its hobbledehoy period. On the other hand, like the drama of the Elizabethan age, it may be fated to flourish in full vigour for less than a generation.

When Dublin began to produce a school of native playwrights the time was past by several years since Ibsen had been staged with comparative success in London

and the battle fought on his behalf by Mr. Archer and Mr. Gosse virtually won. In 1893 six plays by Ibsen were produced in London, and in the preceding year Hauptmann's *Die Weber* appeared in Germany. Hauptmann's play was an extension of Ibsen's social drama to sociological and economic study in the method and spirit of the commission of inquiry; and it provided the pattern which has since been followed by innumerable playwrights both in the country of its origin and in England. The tide set strongly in the direction of realistic and intellectual drama; and, though this form cannot claim to have won great popularity, it is the only form of drama, to speak in general terms, in which work of any value or significance has been done in the past twenty years. To Ireland, however, may be assigned the credit of creating a drama, not cosmopolitan and realistic, but national, poetical and humorous, a drama which without pretence of the higher intellectualism rendered faithfully the pains and joys of simple men and women. And it is in this, the reaction, conscious or unconscious, against the European dominance of Ibsen—that the drama of the Irish Revival is remarkable and noteworthy. For the first time in its history Ireland has produced a drama that is national, owing little to extraneous influences. The plays of Sheridan and Goldsmith expressed nothing that was exclusively Irish, and the drama of Wilde in a later generation reflects Paris and London. But contemporary Irish dramatists have worked out their own salvation, finding their sources not in the printed drama of other countries but in the living Irishman on the soil or in the streets of Dublin and country towns. That they have wholly banished the memory of Ibsen, Hauptmann and Maeterlinck it would be idle to pretend; yet in their more individual work they have succeeded in making a new drama that has a method peculiarly its own in style and in the substitution of a poetry of human passion in place of objective and intellectual dissection.

In the preface to *The Bending of the Bough* Mr. George Moore supplies, in the mood of dogmatic generalisation native to his thought, an explanation of the motive which led to the foundation of the Irish Literary Theatre. Art, we are told, only flowers in the youth of nations, and

England and London are old. In London the literary drama of Ibsen and Maeterlinck is unacceptable, for art is not desired by the theatre-going public of the great city. Therefore Irish dramatists are content to go to Dublin to produce plays at a slight loss, not for the sake of the public but for the sake of art. In the years which have followed this preface Mr. Moore has discovered that Dublin fails to respond whole-heartedly, and with a readiness that shames London, to the art of the drama. Dublin, like London, is in part a city of pleasure, and there as elsewhere, since Imperial Rome, that section of society which has leisure and money to amuse itself persists in regarding the theatre as primarily a place of entertainment, and the populace still finds perennial joy in the farce, the melodrama and the variety show. The Abbey Theatre, like the prophet, is not without honour save in its own country; and its name is more noised abroad in England and America than in the place of its birth. Mr. Yeats has estimated the audience upon which the Abbey Theatre calls at four thousand young people drawn from the more intelligent and eager section of the lower middle classes, who have been gradually educated to appreciate not only the national *motif* of the new playwrights but the sincerity of their artistic intention. The founders of the Irish Literary Theatre claim that they have been justified in their aims by discovering a new audience. The gallery of the Dublin Theatre, it is said, has been known to applaud the sentiment, "At all events we have no proof that spiritual truths are illusory, whereas we know that the world is"—a sentiment, it is implied, that would pass over the sophisticated and sceptical gallery of England without response.

The perfect graces of civilisation can only be cultivated in small city-states, and the playwright of Dublin has, at least, this advantage over his fellow of London, Berlin or Paris, that he makes his first appeal to a smaller, a more compact and a more homogeneous public. But if Dublin is fortunate in lying removed from the highways of European commercialism and industrialism, she is not wholly at unity within herself. Dublin Castle is the centre of foreign influences and ideas; Trinity College has never wholly identified itself with Irish life; and

Nationalism finds as little use for art as do political movements in other lands. The literary, the poetic, the artistic beauty of Irish drama will find its small audience in London and Chicago as well as in Dublin: it is in the element of association with the traditions and memories of racial life that the plays of the Abbey Theatre will find a devotion in Dublin they cannot hope for elsewhere. This apart, Irish drama is as likely to find genuine appreciation, wide or narrow, in London as in Dublin.

The last century had almost drawn to its close when the Irish Literary Theatre was founded, but now it has a repertory of perhaps not less than a hundred plays. In the initial stages of the project Mr. Yeats was supported by Mr. Martyn and Lady Gregory, and later they were joined by Mr. George Moore. In 1899 *The Countess Cathleen* by Mr. Yeats and *The Heather Field* by Mr. Martyn were produced at the Antient Concert Rooms, Dublin. In the following year Mr. Moore's *Bending of the Bough* was staged, and in 1901 Dr. Hyde's *Twisting of the Rope*, the first play to be produced in Gaelic. English actors fetched from London were first used in these performances; but in 1902 they were replaced by Irish players, who trained themselves in the new drama by acting in pieces by A. E., Mr. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Mr. Colum and Mr. Cousins. The workers in the movement formed themselves into the Irish National Theatre Society; and in 1904, through the generosity of Miss Horniman, they were put in possession of the Abbey Theatre, since then the centre of Irish playwriting. The ideals of the Abbey Theatre have begotten the work of a group of talented young dramatists. Its repertory is a body of drama national in temper, original in style, inspired with poetical image and metaphor, a drama which has no close counterpart in Europe to-day. The preservation of Irish nationality was, as Lady Gregory asserts, the chief end of the Gaelic league. And this ideal has given also to the Irish dramatists what otherwise they would not have possessed in equal measure. It has given to them, and not only to Synge, of whom Lady Gregory uses the words, "fable, emotion, style."

CHAPTER V

THE IRISH PLAYWRIGHTS

W. B. Yeats—A. E.—Edward Martyn—George Moore—Lady Gregory—J. M. Synge—William Boyle—Padraic Colum—Lennox Robinson—T. C. Murray—Rutherford Mayne—St. John Ervine.

WITHOUT the enthusiasm of Mr. Yeats and his chief supporter, Lady Gregory, the Abbey Theatre would never have been the magnet drawing toward itself so much writing that was original in temper and method. They have not only written for the stage of that theatre, but inspired others of a younger generation to gather themselves into a group of dramatists animated with a national ideal. Therefore, though Mr. Yeats is a lyric poet and not a dramatist, his prose dramas cannot be overlooked. Verse-drama is doubtless his ideal, and the prose-plays are probably, in part at least, an attempt to answer the demands of the average audience in Dublin. Of the four plays in prose—*Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1903), *A Pot of Broth* (1902), *The Hour-glass: A Morality* (1903) and *Where There is Nothing* (1903)—the first-named is not only dramatically the most successful but the most distinctively Irish in its atmosphere. The action of the play is placed at the time of the French landing of 1798, and Ireland is presented under the figure of a poor old woman. A lad who is asked by cottagers if he has seen her pass replies: "I did not, but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen." The thought of the play is that which inspires the whole Irish movement—Ireland is old in history but young in spirit. The future is yet with her, though strangers are in her house, and her "four beautiful green fields" have been taken away. The dialogue of this play scarcely springs from the characters, but the style has a charm in its entire simplicity. And this alone relieves the obtrusive didacti-

William Butler Yeats, b. 1865.

cism of the piece and shelters the allegorical intention which is thrust to the foreground.

A Pot of Broth is merely slight farce, written in a spirit different to anything else from Mr. Yeats' pen.

Of a different character again are *The Hour-glass*, which shows the wisdom of the Fool who believes in the invisible world and the folly of the Wise Man who believes only in that which may be seen and handled, and his longest dramatic writing, *Where There is Nothing*, an extraordinary medley representing chiefly the religious ecstasies and desire of union with the infinite of a man in the modern world disillusioned with the conventional and unintelligent materialism of the age. The world of spiritual vision, in which the soul has communion with dreams transcending the harsh reality of common life, is Mr. Yeats' haven of refuge from "fanciless fact"; and therefore he has given what there is in him to give chiefly in mystical lyrics. In writing for the stage he has been most successful when he wrought out in verse the dim legends of Ireland's heroic past. And the strength of his verse-plays is in their poetry, not their action. That drama may be romantic Shakespeare has abundantly proved, but it may be doubted whether lasting drama can ever be written save by the writer who finds no strangeness in contact with human nature in the rough. And in this faculty Mr. Yeats is weak. Whatever slight element of it we find in his plays may be attributed to the influence of Lady Gregory. His journeyings to gather folk-lore and song from the peasantry of Sligo have not given him that friendly companionship with the common people, that knowledge of their thought, speech and humour which lend truth, vigour, raciness to the dialogue of Synge, Lady Gregory and Mr. Padraic Colum. Songs and legendary tales have been to Mr. Yeats literary material, absorbed and transfigured in reproduction by the workings of an individual and differentiated imagination. *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, the best of the prose plays, is patently allegorical; and the others are of interest, not as drama, but as additional illustrations of the mood and thought of the contemporary Celtic Revival in its contact with the bare and circumstantial detail of the modern world.

And with but little change these comments apply to the venture in drama of Mr. Yeats' fellow-poet, A. E., *Deirdre* (1902), which, conceived and written rapidly, is the work of a lyric and mystical poet. It is one outcome of the Irish Literary Theatre, but it can take no place in the drama of value produced by the movement.

A. E., George W. Russell, b. 1867.

Among those who wrote plays for the new theatre in its tentative beginnings the names of Mr. Edward Martyn and Mr. George Moore are of greater importance. Mr. Martyn was one of the first to be drawn into the movement, and one of the first to fall away gradually after his play, *A Tale of a Town* (1902), had been refused. Although he possesses fertility of ideas Mr. Martyn has not always been able to use his gift with dramatic effect; and, like Mr. Moore, he is by temperament and experience out of touch with the romance, poetry and mysticism, peasant humour and peasant speech, which are the ground of the folk-play the Irish Theatre set itself to produce. He is more at home in representing the educated and middle classes of Ireland, and, in consequence, his work is less distinctively national. Nevertheless *The Heather Field* (1899), one of the first plays produced in Dublin under the auspices of the new movement, was a popular success. The theme—the contrast between harsh fact and Celtic idealism—is elucidated in the story of the Irish landlord who sacrifices his all and sinks into madness in the vain attempt to realise waste land. In the art of construction Mr. Martyn showed himself in this play a competent student of Ibsen; the poetry and beauty of natural scenery he used skilfully as a background to the action; but the relationship of the dialogue to the characters is insecure and even false. The success of the play may be attributed to its excellent construction and, consequently, its direct appeal to the audience. The *motif* of *Maeve* (1899) is the same—Ireland's choice of the splendid dream in place of the material fact—but this mystic and symbolic play is far withdrawn from the everyday character of *The Heather Field*. Mr. Martyn's first play seemed to hold the promise

Edward Martyn, b. 1859.

of a new dramatist whose limitations were, perhaps, but those of inexperience. Unfortunately he belied his first promise and fell back upon crude sensationalism in *The Enchanted Sea* (1902), political propagandism in *A Tale of a Town* (1902), the drab severity and impersonal dialogue of Ibsen in *The Place Hunters* (1905) and *Grange-colman* (1912).

Mr. Martyn obviously does not belong to the central group of Irish playwrights who adopt an artificial and literary simplicity in order to escape the trammels of civilisation and shake off the sophisticated manners of a world that has grown a weariness to them. Their style is often a deliberate artifice, their subjects are garnered from dream-stories of the past or unsullied nooks of primitive life and thought in modern Ireland. With these aims Mr. Martyn has nothing in common save his Irish Nationalism. He dramatises the bourgeois and middle-class life of his country in the present day; his peasants, if they are introduced, are but foils to the other characters; his art he has learned not from Mr. Yeats and Synge but from Ibsen; and his dialogue approximates to Ibsen in his most serious lapses from truth to character. Mr. Martyn would be as successful, neither more nor less, were his scenes laid outside Ireland. The life of his country is but the accidental background of his drama; and his connection with the Irish Literary Theatre is equally as accidental.

George Moore, b. 1853.

The return of Mr. Moore to Ireland, his active participation in the work of the Irish Theatre, his late-born attempt to recover for himself the heritage of the Gael, were surprising as an example of *volte-face* in the disciple of the French realists. But the change was ushered in with a prelude: not only was Ulick Dean, in *Evelyn Innes*, studied from Mr. Yeats, but the anxious preoccupation of the narrative and its sequel, *Sister Teresa*, with spiritual problems was an outward sign of new theory and discipleship. And in 1901 Mr. Moore returned to Dublin, to live there for a large part of the next ten years. His first enthusiasm soon cooled to lukewarmness, and then turned to sceptical criticism. And the most important consequence of Mr. Moore's connection

with the Abbey Theatre is not to be found in his plays, but in *The Lake*, the short stories of *The Untilled Field*, and in the trilogy, *Hail and Farewell;* for, despite the gift of dramatic characterisation exhibited in the novels, Mr. Moore has not the genius of a writer for the stage.

Before his conversion to the cult of the Gael Mr. Moore had staged *The Strike at Arlingford* (1893) in answer to a challenge from Mr. G. R. Sims. The construction of this piece is good, but otherwise it has little to recommend it; it is not the original and unconventional piece the author hoped to make it. One of the first plays produced by the Irish Literary Theatre, Mr. Moore's *Bending of the Bough* (1900), was a complete rewriting of Mr. Martyn's *Tale of a Town*, after it had been refused in its earlier form. In credibility of action Mr. Moore may have improved upon his original; but just where the author is strongest in his novels he is weakest in *The Bending of the Bough*. It is a colourless production, its dialogue largely in the air and devoid of local characteristics—a play made in the study about people whom the author has not known intimately. His next play, *Diarmid and Grania* (1901), was the result of collaboration with Mr. Yeats in the dramatisation of one of Ireland's ancient legends. In the realm of the mythic and legendary Mr. Moore is not at his ease, and Mr. Yeats who *is* has been overpowered by his collaborator, with the consequence that the play is false in atmosphere.

With *Diarmid and Grania* Mr. Moore's direct support of the Irish Theatre with his pen ceased, although he has since made one or two further essays in the art of dramatic writing. *Esther Waters* in dramatised version (1911) proved, however, lengthy and ineffective: and *Elizabeth Cooper* (1913), containing an excellent subject for light farce thrown away by mishandling, came only as if to show that Mr. Moore had turned to the stage too late and did not possess the knowledge required of the playwright. His connection with the Celtic Movement as with the stage has been incidental and fortuitous, and to discover the true genius of Mr. Moore we must turn to him when he is writing in other veins and after another manner.

Mr. Martyn and Mr. Moore have long since dropped away from the other founders of the Irish Literary Theatre; but Mr. Yeats and Lady Gregory remain, and to the latter the repertory of the Abbey Theatre owes some of its best caprices and farcical dialogues. Nevertheless in *Our Irish Theatre* (1913), in which Lady Gregory relates the fortunes of the Abbey Theatre, she informs us that until she was carried into the new movement she "never cared much for the stage." Nor did the renascence of interest in Irish life and literature prompt her at first to dramatic writing. To Lady Gregory, Dr. Hyde and Mr. Yeats has chiefly fallen the task of resuscitating the older cycles of Gaelic legend. Their place in the story of literature will be found in Dr. Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland;* Mr. Yeats has used the tales of Finn and Cuchulain in his dramas and dramatic poems, *On Baile's Strand, Deirdre* and *The Wanderings of Oisin;* to Lady Gregory it was left to arrange the two greater cycles and adapt them to English prose narrative, written with an artifice and simplicity which make her books among the most delightful to English readers of any that have come out of Ireland in recent years. In *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904) she has collected the older cycles of the Tuatha de Danaan and the Fianna, including the stories of Finn, Diarmuid and Oisin, in *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902) are gathered the later stories of the Red Branch cycle, which centre in the hero, Cuchulain. And in the same style are written the stories of a different character contained in the *Book of Saints and Wonders* (1908). These legends are written, to use Lady Gregory's phrase, "in the manner of the thatched houses," that is in the idiom of Irish peasant speech. Lady Gregory attributes the "Kiltartan English" of her prose adaptations and plays to the influence of the idiom employed by Dr. Hyde in his translations from the songs of Connacht. This style, with the admixture in each case of whatever element of personality may individually be possible, has become the common property of a number of the Irish writers, and, though it may be an impertinence of the reader who can claim but the slightest knowledge of Irish peasant speech to doubt the reality of this dialect, it is difficult to avoid

Lady Gregory, b. 1852.

a suspicion that it is an artifice as unreal as the earlier convention of Lover and Lever. By admirers it is asserted that "Kiltartan English" is a living speech; but to Mr. Moore it is only known as a literary device, and a device not always handled with skill. The unfamiliarity of the idiom, the quaint turns of speech, the inversion of common order in words take the English reader by surprise and delight him with the charm of the unexpected. It is only on a re-reading that the literary artificiality, the tortured simplicity of the style become apparent, and it ceases to give the clear ring of good coin. Lady Gregory and those who follow the path of "Kiltartan English" gain their effect largely by sprinkling the page at odd moments with far-sought idioms and curious inversions, as spangles are inserted on a material yet form no true part of its texture. The scattered spangles are superimposed, and "Kiltartan English," in like manner, has all the appearance of being manufactured by sprinkling modern literary English with local idioms. It is a convention, and a good convention, but whether it is more seems doubtful. As Lady Gregory handles it, however, it has quaintness, beauty and charm; and in rendering the romances of a dim and legendary world it justifies itself.

Lady Gregory has told us that she first wrote plays to relieve audiences who were, perhaps, in danger of being wearied by the verse and romance of A. E., Mr. Yeats and Synge. Nevertheless she, also, has dramatised tales from the legendary and romantic period of Ireland; but, despite her success in translating and adapting the ancient tales, she is not altogether happy in the atmosphere of historic drama. *Kincora* (1905) carries us back to Ireland of the eleventh century. It is not only without the largeness that Synge and the lyric intensity Mr. Yeats would have brought to the same theme—it is weak and even false in sentiment. *Dervorgilla* (1907) dramatises loosely and not very effectively the heart-sorrow of Dervorgilla, who brought the great curse upon Ireland by introducing the English. In *Grania* (1912) the story is carried to a prehistoric epoch; and in this one play of old Ireland Lady Gregory shows herself capable of writing great and romantic tragedy, though a tragedy of the soul better understood in the reading than the acting. In this

play she handles her literary idiom, here so congruous and fitting, with singular power and beauty. *The White Cockade* (1905) and *The Canavans* (1906) have their historic setting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the latter is chiefly successful in its representation of the Irish peasantry, who have not greatly changed from the days of Elizabeth to our own.

Lady Gregory's historical dramas have been collected in *Irish Folk-history Plays* (1912), and the whole content of these two volumes, if *Grania* be excepted, affords but the slightest indication of strong dramatic talent. These historical plays are written with good intention, gifts of phrase and style, a deep love of Ireland and its people, but they fail dramatically, for the action, where there is any, is but unconvincingly related to the characters. And if the same charge is to be brought against *The Image* (1910), its proper apology is that the whole piece is allegorical farce, attempting no realistic treatment of character and situation. It is a play of modern Ireland suffused with esoteric meaning. The image which the humble stone-mason is to carve is the province of Connacht, and the diverse attitudes toward the project of characters in the play is figurative of the vision of a future Ireland as it appears to differing minds. But the esoteric meaning, unless explained, is hard to come by, and might not be suspected by the English reader; the dialogue is loose and rambling; and dramatically the piece does not arrest the attention.

Lady Gregory's best work for the stage is to be found in her one-act farces and dialogues. These have been collected in *Seven Short Plays* (1909) and *New Irish Comedies* (1914). Many of them turn upon the *motif* of a whimsical misunderstanding. *Spreading the News* (1904) is a laughable skit upon the absurd proportions a false rumour assumes as it spreads from mouth to mouth. *Hyacinth Halvey* (1906) sketches an episode in the career of a young man who comes from Carrow to Cloon armed with a huge parcel of glowing testimonials to the unparalleled integrity of his character. He is a very ordinary young man, not above the love of a spree, and the exalted opinion the townsfolk of Cloon conceive of him on the strength of his testimonials becomes an intolerable burden, making

him long for death. He steals the carcase of a sheep in order to disillusion his admirers, only to be overwhelmed with the gratitude of the butcher who has thereby been saved from conviction for stocking tainted meat. He robs a Protestant church, and when he avows the deed is hailed as the magnanimous hero who takes the sin on his shoulders to save a poor lad who is suspect; and forthwith he is chaired away to a meeting to deliver an address on the building up of character. *The Jackdaw* (1907) and *The Workhouse Ward* (1908) turn upon the like ingenious entanglements of circumstance. In all these one-act plays the dexterity of the dialogue, the neatness of the artifice, the dovetailing of misconception and cross-purpose have the perfection of an effortless feat in skilful juggling, a combination of touch and sense of balance that could in no wise be bettered. Not less delightful are the whimsical turns of thought and speech which Lady Gregory gives to her characters. There is, for example, the old army pensioner who takes pride of scholarship in the memory that once he used to sleep " in the one bed with two boys that were learning Greek."

Of an entirely different character is *The Gaol Gate* (1906), which closes with a long lament in Biblical language. The lament is beautiful and deeply moving, but utterly undramatic in its context. This tragic little sketch can only be spoiled in the acting; for the materialisation of the scene—the helplessness of two poor women, a mother and a wife, who discover at the prison door that the man nearest their heart has been executed—defines in harsh outline what can only be conceived as the poetry of the soul. Most beautiful also in conception is *MacDonough's Wife* (1911), which tells how the wandering musician with the lament of his pipes drew from the fair and the sheep-shearing all men to the grave of his wife.

Lady Gregory's genius in dramatic writing shines most clearly in exaggerated comedy and farcical dialogue. *Grania*, *The Gaol Gate* and *MacDonough's Wife*, in which she essays tragedy, romantically and poetically conceived, do not lend themselves to the stage, for she is without the gifts necessary to success in that form of drama in which Synge is immeasurably beyond all his contemporaries whether in Ireland or England. Style and fine speeches

drama may contain, but it can never be built upon these alone. The greatness of Synge lies in his large poetic conception, his broad outline, his massings of light and shadow, not in his style. If, however, Lady Gregory is by no means at her best in romantic drama, she has the power to write dialogue in a mood of everyday humour, with whimsical turns of thought and expression, that is quick, racy and flexible, and it is this faculty which makes her short farcical sketches the finest of their kind the Abbey Theatre has produced. Not only is the economy in word and phrase admirable, the touch incomparably light and deft, but her humour, exaggerated and grotesque though it may sometimes be, never blunderingly transgresses the limits of the probable or destroys illusion by grating needlessly against our powers of belief. Lady Gregory's historical plays are best read; her farces are equally good in the reading and on the stage. Their niceness and aptitude in the portrayal of character through swift and easy dialogue has rarely been equalled.

John Millington Synge, 1871–1909.

John Millington Synge, indubitably the strongest and most original genius of the contemporary Celtic Revival, came late into his own; and four or five years cover that period of his productivity which is of any account. *In the Shadow of the Glen* was performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, in 1903, and early in 1909 Synge died in a private hospital. He was born at Rathfarnham, County Dublin, in 1871, and received his education at Trinity College, Dublin. After this he spent some years in Germany and in Paris reading, and writing unsuccessfully in a desultory manner. He also travelled the roads through Italy, France and Bavaria, supporting himself apparently, on an income of forty pounds a year. In 1899 he was discovered in Paris by Mr. W. B. Yeats. Synge showed him some of his essays in authorship, but Mr. Yeats perceiving that so far "life had cast no light on his writings," advised him to "Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression." Synge took the advice, and for the next few years habitually lived part of his time on Aran studying the islanders and making notes of their idioms and speech.

Mr. Yeats has an admirable sentence in which the character of Synge and the whole personality of the man is set before us: "He was a drifting silent man full of hidden passion, and loved wild islands, because there, set out in the light of day, he saw what lay hidden in himself." *The Aran Islands* was not published till 1907, but it was written three or four years earlier. The book is stored with those impressions which are the making of Synge's plays; here are their plots as well as their dialect and setting. Here, for example, is the story of the old woman who saw her drowned son riding toward the sea on a horse. In *Riders to the Sea* Maurya cries, "I looked up then, and I crying, at the gray pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet." In *The Aran Islands*, or in *West Kerry* and *In Wicklow* (1906–7), may be discovered the seed of most of Synge's plots—the anecdote of the man who killed his father with a spade, afterwards used in *The Playboy*, the story of the two tinkers who agreed with the priest to marry them for a half-sovereign and a "fine can," used in *The Tinker's Wedding*. And, of more importance, living in the west among the people and as one of them, listening to their talk in shebeens and cabins of Aran, overhearing servant girls through a chink in the floor, noting down faithfully impressions of mist and sea and land, and setting down word for word innumerable phrases of peasant speech Synge gathered directly from life the matter that makes his plays. Few men could have been less interested in the literature of the day, in the thought or the politics of the world. In his later years he read hardly any books, and was scarcely known to express an opinion on a modern writer. Yet Synge has left behind him a drama which is at once faithful to life and literary. The power to write and the knowledge of books have not always been close companions; but where the influence of books is little the gap must be filled with a theory: even Shakespeare had a theory of craft and style which he followed with surprising closeness. And Synge's theory was developed by the experiences recorded in his journal kept on the western islands. By nature reserved and uncommunicative he never spoke much of himself or his ideals; but *The Aran Islands*

came as near as he could approach to the writing of a personal confession; and, judged from a purely literary standpoint, it is, perhaps, together with *The Well of the Saints*, his finest and most distinctive piece of work. Interest in human nature is the ruling motive from the first page to the last, yet the clouds, the wide skies, the bleak islands the rocky shores washed by the rustling sea, are painted with a perfection of power and beauty. In his poems Synge gave little evidence of sensitiveness to environment, but in his prose and his dramas it constantly emerges. In *The Aran Islands* we read of a day of storm:

> "For the rest of my walk I saw no living thing but one flock of curlews, and a few pipits hiding among the stones.
>
> "About the sunset the clouds broke and the storm turned to a hurricane. Bars of purple cloud stretched across the sound where immense waves were rolling from the west, wreathed with snowy phantasies of spray. Then there was the bay full of green delirium, and the Twelve Pins touched with mauve and scarlet in the east.
>
> "The suggestion from this world of inarticulate power was immense, and now at midnight, when the wind is abating, I am still trembling and flushed with exultation."

The passage is enough to show the reserved and grave simplicity of Synge's prose style; and among topographical books *The Aran Islands* will probably in time take its place in English with the few itineraries that belong to literature. For it is, despite what has already been said, chiefly a book of topography, miscellany, anecdote, not a personal journal: Synge holds himself in reserve, looking out objectively on the life of the islands.

In the study *The Aran Islands* will, perhaps, be taken off the shelf more often than any volume of Synge; nevertheless his great work, and the word great may here be used advisedly, is in his dramas, which are all short. In 1903 and 1904 two one-act plays *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Riders to the Sea*, were produced in Dublin; three three-act plays, *The Well of the Saints*, *The Playboy*

of the Western World and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, followed between 1905 and 1910; and *The Tinker's Wedding*, a play in two acts, was first produced in London in 1909. These plays at first met with a hostile reception. Ireland took a pride in the chastity of its peasant women and on this *In the Shadow of the Glen* seemed to reflect; and *The Playboy of the Western World*, which was supposed to exalt into a hero the man who had slain his father, aroused furious anger. These demonstrations illustrate the curious lapses from humour of the Irish mind; for the Irishman, when serious, has the least flexible intelligence in the world.

That Synge's six plays were a great and notable event in the story of English dramatic writing cannot be gainsaid, and the passage of time will almost certainly give them a more assured place than they hold to-day. But in the last few years our ears have been deafened with noisy and undiscriminating praise of Synge's work, which has been lauded as the greatest thing in English since Shakespeare. When we remember that George Eliot received exactly the same praise of men we are given reason for pause. We still stand so close to Synge that the attempt to assign definite rank to his drama is hazardous; yet it seems unlikely that he will pass out of sight and regard. In his work four great qualities combine—the faculty of dramatic visualisation, reverence for reality, poetry in concept and thought, and the unexpected in style. When Synge's admirers compare his work to the plays of the Elizabethan age they are primarily thinking of the poetry in his drama. In the permeating of drama with poetry it is difficult to think of anything in English greater or more significant than *The Well of the Saints*, *Riders to the Sea* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. It was the belief of Synge that in Ireland "for a few years more we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent and tender," and therefore it was possible to write in Ireland a drama not sick and intellectual like the drama of London, Paris and Berlin, but a drama inspired by reality and joy. Joy may appear a curious term to apply to the themes of Synge's plays—a wife driven to a frenzy of unrest by the lack of companionship in an old and phlegmatic husband, the mother who mourns her sons swallowed by the sea, the halo surrounding a weak

stripling who thinks he has murdered his father, the harsh tragedy of the Deirdre legend—but by joy Synge meant the strong impulse and spirit of poetry latent in emotional natures uncorroded by the conventions of civilisation, the imagination tender and fiery whether it shows itself outwardly in ecstasy or in brooding melancholy. In the midst of the rationalised life led by men in great centres of activity and their broad outskirts the primitive and passionate impulse is almost entirely checked. In the west of Ireland, far removed from the ephemeral fashions of Europe, man is still passionate as he was in the England of Elizabeth, in the world dramatised by Shakespeare, Marlowe and Webster. The joy of life for Synge was the transfiguring power of the primitive, the poetical and the eternal in man.

In combination with this absorbing consciousness of the profound vigour and joy of life Synge possessed dramatic gifts higher than those of any English-writing dramatist of our day. He deals with no surprising incident, sensationalism has no part to play in his art; but the wedding of a travelling tinker and his doxy becomes matter equally as dramatic as the story of *The Duchess of Malfi*. In the craft of the dramatist, it is true, Synge does not outdo many between the time of Shakespeare and the end of the twentieth century. Congreve, Wycherley, Goldsmith, Sheridan had at least as much dramatic sense, and Beddoes almost as much poetry and drama combined. It is easily possible to overstate the achievement of Synge in this respect. That he far surpasses Mr. W. B. Yeats in dramatic faculty needs no saying; but Mr. Padraic Colum in *The Fiddler's House*, Mr. Mayne in *The Drone* are scarcely a whit behind Synge in economy of dialogue, clear visualisation of character and proportionate spacing of their matter. They are, however, immeasurably behind him in poetry, in the power to render atmosphere, in the suggestion of universal significance within a narrow theme, and in individuality of style.

Synge opposed reality to intellectualism: and herein lies the third definitive distinction of his dramatic achievement. The drama of Europe has been intellectual for centuries. Molière's comedy is fashioned by processes of intellect confined within the chambers of an individual

mind; Dumas and Scribe, to leap across the years, are intellectual gymnasts, even in the rendering of emotion. Ibsen, perceiving that the drama of Scribe was outworn, set a new standard; but if ever there were a drama of hot-house intellectualism it is to be found in Ibsen, who confessed that his plays were "deeds of night," composed in the dark recesses of his mind. It is the high merit of the purely Irish school of dramatists that they represent a reaction against intellectual drama. Mr. Moore and Mr. Martyn have remained with Ibsen; but the Irish dramatists as a body owe him little; their debt is to reality not to detached ratiocination. And to Synge was chiefly due the offset against Ibsenism of great romantic drama. The impossible and preposterous in the characters of Ibsen and Mr. Shaw lies in the obsessions of intellectualism and the sophistries of the pulpit. Nora, in *A Doll's House*, not only realises herself upon a sudden but expresses herself with a force and comprehensiveness of outlook which would only be possible after years of reflection; Mr. Shaw's otherwise admirable Father Keegan, the daft and mystical dreamer whom even villagers pity, suddenly utters a new trinitarian theology of modern social conditions. In either case the dramatist is led astray by reading his intellectual prepossessions into his creature.

It may sometimes appear that Synge strains our powers of belief in the same manner. After reading *The Playboy* we are tempted to ask: Is it possible that a country-girl would be filled with admiration for a vagrant who confesses that he slew his father in a fit of passion? When Christy boasts to the company gathered in the shebeen that a prison is behind him, hanging before and hell gaping below, Pegeen is incredulously scornful, but when convinced she is filled with admiration of one capable of being carried by anger to the killing of his father.

"PEGEEN. You're only saying it. You did nothing at all. A soft lad the like of you wouldn't slit the windpipe of a screeching sow.

CHRISTY (*offended*). You're not speaking the truth.

PEGEEN (*in mock rage*). Not speaking the truth, is it? Would you have me knock the head of you with the butt of the broom?

CHRISTY (*twisting round on her with a sharp cry of horror*). Don't strike me. I killed my poor father, Tuesday was a week, for doing the like of that.

PEGEEN (*with blank amazement*). Is it killed your father ?

CHRISTY (*subsiding*). With the help of God I did, surely, and that the Holy Immaculate Mother may intercede for his soul."

This fills Pegeen with naïve admiration, and later, when she has the opportunity of talking to Christy alone, she says : " And I've heard at all times it's the poets are your like—fine, fiery fellows, with great rages when their temper's roused." When again, at a later stage, she learns that Christy only succeeded in stunning his father she rounds upon him in angry contempt : " And to think of the coaxing glory we had given him, and he after doing nothing but hitting a soft blow and chasing northward in a sweat of fear. Quit off from this." On a first impression Pegeen appears a preposterous character, and the whole play reads like one of the manufactured situations of Ibsen or Mr. Shaw ; but we learn that the admiration of Pegeen Mike and the frequenters of the shebeen for the man who is supposed to have murdered his father exactly represents the probable attitude toward a criminal of peasantry in untouched regions of Western Ireland. They accept the fact that no man would kill his father deliberately, and nobody is to be held accountable for his acts when " great rages " are upon him. This offers a plausible explanation of what at first appears to the sophisticated mind an artificial situation. But for Ibsen's worst offences against the possible in human nature there is no explanation, save that reality cannot be conjured out of the mazes of intellectualism.

Synge, however, had no intellectual interests. He cared nothing about theories of life ; he had no message like Ibsen, Maeterlinck or Mr. Shaw ; his sole concern was with living men and women. In an age when literature, between the planes of Mr. H. G. Wells and Hauptmann, is saturated with propagandism, Synge emerges as a writer of outstanding power who has no message of any kind. And for this alone he deserves peculiar honour.

For the dialogue of his drama Synge invented a style in which he professed to use no words which he had not heard on the lips of peasants, to write in the idiom of the man who thinks in Gaelic when he speaks in English. But shades of pronunciation are not rendered, and the sentences are too rounded and rhythmical to be those of everyday speech. Nobody in real life ever talked like the characters of Synge. The speech of these plays is a literary convention, and, in some degree at least, it is a mosaic. In Western Ireland the peasant often speaks in English with a Gaelic idiom because he is thinking in Gaelic; but in Eastern and Central Ireland where English has been spoken for centuries Elizabethan forms survive. Thus in Synge's style we have Elizabethan English, the English of the Bible and Gaelic idiom jostling each other. Old Maurya (*Riders to the Sea*), lamenting her son, is a woman whose tongue is Gaelic:

> "They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind backs from the south, and you can hear the surf in the east, and the surf in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening."

But in *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, in which Synge goes back to an old and legendary world, he writes in a speech mingled of Gaelic idiom and the intonations of the Authorised Version of the Bible.

> "Lay out your mats and hangings where I can stand this night and look about me. Lay out the skins of the rams of Connaught and of the goats of the west. I will not be a child or a plaything; I'll put on my robes that are the richest, for I will not be brought down to Emain as Cuchulain brings his horse to the yoke, or Conall Cearneach puts his shield upon his arm; and maybe from this day I will turn the men of Ireland like a wind blowing on the heath."

This is scarcely modified Biblical English; and the language the translators of King James employed was archaic even in their day. Synge was led to an extreme because he ignored the fact that in English the idiom of literature has never been the idiom of the spoken language. In poetry this has always been true, save for lapses in the eighteenth century; in prose the contrast is less marked, but it exists. People never talked like the *Religio Medici*, nor do they speak now as Lafcadio Hearn or Mr. Joseph Conrad write. Synge laboured under the illusion that he had discovered an original, a tender and imaginative speech in the talk of the peasantry of Ireland, just as Wordsworth, a century earlier, found the Cumberland dalesman speaking in "the real language of men." The language of the Cumberland labourer, however, was no more real than the language of the Bible and the Prayer Book, whence it reached him, and it was poorer in vocabulary. In like manner the spoken English of the west of Ireland is not a better or more real language than the best English of books because it is contorted with Gaelic idioms and the words are few. The drama and the novel which reproduce a true dialect have their justification. Synge only succeeded in producing a convention which delights with its quaint inconsequences, just as the faltering language of children has its vigour and charm. But it may be conceded to him that he made the convention as real and individual to himself as the translators of King James made the English of the Bible. When he wrote his dramas he thought in the language he invented.

Every page of his plays shows that Synge understood the requirements of the stage; but, on the whole, with the exception of *The Well of the Saints*, he is at his best in the shortest pieces. In *The Playboy of the Western World* the latter part of the second and the whole of the third act overweigh the introduction, and the action is checked without any of the compensation offered by the common antithesis of the fourth act of a Shakespearean drama. The interest between the first appearance of Old Mahon in the second act and his discovery of the runaway son who felled him with a loy in the third is insufficiently maintained. In *Deirdre of the Sorrows* also, where

we are carried away from modern Ireland, the action is wanting in flexibility and impetus.

Of the three-act plays the early *Well of the Saints* stands first in poetry, in beauty of form, in substantial humanity and in the truth of that symbolism which reminds us how far Synge is beyond Maeterlinck even on his own ground. In the first act we see Martin Doul and his wife, Mary, two blind and weather-beaten beggars, sitting by the wayside. They are talking together of the joys of sight, and Martin falls into a voluptuous strain. His wife reproves him :

> " Ah, there's a power of villainy walking the world, Martin Doul, among them that do be gadding around, with their gaping eyes, and their sweet words, and they with no sense in them at all.
>
> " MARTIN DOUL (*sadly*). It's the truth, maybe, yet I'm told it's a grand thing to see a young girl walking the road."

A saint with a can of holy water restores sight to them, and for the first time the pair who were happy in their blindness and " day-long blessed idleness " are disillusioned. He sees his wife for a wrinkled old hag, and she sees him for a stumpy and ugly old man. Furthermore Martin is compelled to work for his living : he has no blindness to bring him coppers as he sits idly by the roadside. Fortunately blindness returns upon them, and they are happy till they hear the saint's bell coming again their way. They grope hastily for hiding, but are discovered and dragged before the saint, who offers to cure them once more. Both plead piteously to be spared the curse of sight. Blindness is better Martin knows than to open one's eyes on the bleeding feet of the saint " and they cut with stones," or " the villainy of hell " looking out from the eyes of a girl. The old man grows bitter :

> " And wasn't it great sights I seen on the roads when the north winds would be driving, and the skies would be harsh, till you'd see the horses and the asses, and the dogs itself, maybe, with their heads hanging, and they closing their eyes."

But when he and Mary were blinded :

"It's ourselves had finer sights than the like of them, I'm telling you, when we were sitting a while back hearing the birds and bees humming in every weed of the ditch, or when we'd be smelling the sweet, beautiful smell does be rising in the warm nights, when you do be hearing the swift flying things racing in the air, till we'd be looking up in our own minds into the grand sky, and seeing lakes and big rivers, and fine hills for taking the plough."

It is difficult to conceive *The Well of the Saints* bettered in any respect. In its spiritual insight, its psychology, its humour, its dialogue, its allegory which yet carries no obtrusive message, it is the greatest thing Synge ever wrote.

Flawless also is the human pathos of the one-act *Riders to the Sea*. Old Maurya has lost the last of her sons in the sea; but she knows that "no man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied." And on a slightly lower level of human appeal and beauty of form may be placed *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *The Tinker's Wedding*.

"A drifting silent man full of hidden passion"—in these words we have the key to the personality of Synge and the character of his plays. Impersonal, brooding, humorous, with a strange twist of ironic mysticism, Synge is the one writer since the Elizabethan age of England who has written great romantic drama. Wit, humour, intellect are not enough to satisfy the soul of man; and the many failures of our poets to write plays in verse are a recognition of the truth that great drama, which is to fill the soul with joy and exultation, must be poetical. In verse Synge had no power; but his prose-plays are in their conception life transfigured by poetry; and the style he made unto himself has a cadence and rhythm which communicates all the pleasure of metre. The plays of Synge may be compared to the novels of Mr. Hardy. In either case the writer has raised action and prose-narrative to the plane of poetry and imbued the story of rough and home-spun lives with a universal symbolism; for Destiny, as conceived by the tragic poets of Greece, presides over the unheeding war of events.

The plays of Synge dramatise the character of the western Irishman; Lady Gregory's people belong to Clare and Galway; but Ireland has also produced, in its different provinces and counties, younger dramatists who write of the peasants or the middle-class folk of the towns as they know them in their own districts. Mr. Colum and Mr. William Boyle belong to the midlands, Mr. Lennox Robinson to the south, Mr. Mayne and Mr. Ervine to the north. Though Ireland is a small country she not only speaks Gaelic and English, but English in several dialects, and, in addition to the grand difference between Protestant Ulster and the Catholic South, the working-background of life differs largely from county to county.

William Boyle, b. 1853.

Mr. Boyle was no longer a young man when he was drawn into writing for the Abbey Theatre, and with only one play has he won, or perhaps deserved, success. *The Building Fund* (1905) is powerful in characterisation, and renders the unattractive background of the tale strongly and realistically. None of the characters wins our sympathy, but with striking force and directness the play presents a picture of the relationship of a malicious and miserly mother to her scheming son and selfish granddaughter. Unfortunately Mr. Boyle has not succeeded in reaching again the standard he set himself in this play. *The Eloquent Dempsey* (1906), a satire on the verbose insincerity of one type of Irish politician, quickly sinks into broad farce. The complicated *Mineral Workers* (1906) is a loose and shapeless piece of writing; and with *Family Failings* (1912), which followed after a break of several years, Mr. Boyle was unable to recover his lost ground.

Padraic Colum.

In his pictures of the same part of Ireland, the east and midlands which have been transformed by the long speaking of English, by newspapers and by schools, Mr. Colum has shown greater dramatic art and more promise for the future. *The Land*, which was produced at the Abbey Theatre in 1905, is a comedy upon the exaggerated veneration of old Murtagh Cosgar for the land he has won with a life's toil, and his disappointment with a son who refuses to be coerced into a like religious devotion

to "a bit of land and a house." The dialogue of the play is not good, and the humour serves no special purpose in illuminating character; but the play is essentially Irish in its emphasis upon the Irishman's passion for the ownership of a strip of land, however poor. Far better in workmanship and truth to the individual character is *The Fiddler's House* (1907). In this play love of the land also enters as part of the plot scheme. Conn Hourican, the old fiddler, a vagrant of the roads, has settled in a cottage with his two daughters, but love of his art and the *Wanderlust* are too strong for him. He leaves the house to his younger daughter, who is to be married, and takes to "the lasting kindness of the road" with his elder daughter. Conn is admirably drawn, as is also the gypsy character of the elder daughter, Maire. The play is straightforward and strong writing, with good conception of character. In 1910 came *Thomas Muskerry*, the story of a workhouse master, which illustrates the drabness and dreary confinement of life in a small Irish town. A larger number of characters is introduced than in either of the earlier plays, they are not as definitely portrayed, no character reaches the level of Conn or Maire Hourican, and the dialogue tends to drag. Mr. Colum inclines to harshness in characterisation; but *The Fiddler's House* is redeemed by a strong vein of romance, and for this reason it is by far the best and most human of his plays. In none is his dialogue invariably true to character; but Mr. Colum writes with style, he is yet young, and it is probable that better work is to come from him.

Lennox Robinson, b. 1886.

Mr. Lennox Robinson comes from Cork, his Ireland is of the south, and he knows the people of town and country intimately both in their virtues and their failings. He is observant, critical, quick to note shams, and his pictures of Irish life are tinged with ironic satire, but not with contempt. It is difficult to believe, however, that to the complacent Irishman Mr. Robinson's plays can be wholly gratifying. From this statement may be excepted his early play, *The Clancy Name* (1908), which turns upon the unconvincing plot-idea of a man saving the reputation of the Clancy name and forestalling the temptation to confess himself a murderer to the

authorities by committing suicide. For an immature play this is remarkably good in character-drawing; but its faithfulness in this respect is negatived by the extravagant and sensational theme. *The Crossroads* (1909) is a well-knit play, showing powers of observation, careful workmanship and a fine instinct for sharp outline in sketching character. Its satire upon the slovenly inefficiency of the southern Irish farmer and the deplorable results of loveless marriages arranged by parents (a common practice among the Irish peasantry) is uncompromising. Mr. Robinson's satire in this and the two succeeding plays is severe because he is in earnest and wishes well to his victims. *Harvest* (1910) is an indictment, perhaps a little unnecessary, of the older type of education which flourished in the Irish villages. *Patriots* (1912), with more point, mercilessly satirises sham political agitation and rhetorical patriotism; in force and truth it may be counted with *The Crossroads* as representing the best Mr. Robinson has yet given us.

With Mr. Robinson may be named another realistic dramatist of southern Ireland, Mr. T. C. Murray. His *Birthright* (1910) touches again the perennial Irish theme—the heritage of the land and the relationship to their inheritance of those born upon it. *Maurice Harte* (1912) brings us to the soul of Irish Catholicism, and represents the tragedy of a mother's life when she learns that the son of her hope can never be a priest.

T. C. Murray, b. 1873.

In the case of Mr. Robinson and Mr. Murray it is clear that the romantic and poetic drama, which it was the work of Mr. Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory to restore to the stage, has ceased to be the only influence. Save in the background and setting of the action there is little to distinguish their work from the intellectual and realistic drama of London and Berlin. The criticism applies equally to the ironic and slightly exaggerated humour of Mr. Rutherford Mayne's comedy, *The Drone* (1908), and to his tragedy, *The Troth* (1908). In *Red Turf* (1911), on the other hand, he deserts the north, which is his real country, and writes a poetic drama of Galway avowedly modelled upon the style of Synge.

Rutherford Mayne, b. 1878.

Mr. St. John Ervine, likewise, another Ulster dramatist, is the realistic painter of drab and sordid scenes. His character-drawing is admirably clear-cut, but *Mixed Marriage* (1911) is too slight and brief to support its tragedy, which is founded upon fact—the death of a girl accidentally shot by soldiers during Belfast strike riots. *Jane Clegg* (1913) is a far better play, combining admirably elements of realism and excellent humour, which promise well for Mr. Ervine's future development. But the play has nothing to do with Ireland.

St. John Ervine, b. 1883.

The work of the younger dramatists of the Abbey and Ulster Literary Theatres shows that the world has been too much for the Celtic Revival. Already the movement has learned to don a modish garb, to think the thoughts and speak after the fashions of the towns. The drama's need of joy and reality, as Synge conceived these things, has little meaning for Mr. Colum, Mr. Boyle, Mr. Robinson and Mr. Ervine. For reality they have substituted realism, for joy dispassionate observation, till there is little that is essential to distinguish their plays from the social drama of Hauptmann, Schnitzler, Mr. Galsworthy or St. John Hankin. If we are to judge their drama by its aims it may readily be admitted that several of these younger dramatists have done remarkably good work and that better plays may well be expected of them. But the poetry, the romance, the mysticism, the brooding passion, the wistful melancholy of Mr. Yeats, Lady Gregory, A. E. and Synge—where are these? The Abbey Theatre is the outcome of a well-defined national and artistic impulse, but the foster-mother has gathered about her a strange brood of ducklings, for her latest plays are not more national in temper or Celtic in spirit than the cosmopolitan drama of the great European cities. Their colour may be local, but the mood of the authors is realistic, satirical, detached. The death of Synge in 1909 may be counted as the end of the first period of the Abbey Theatre's work. The second, which is now being written, has but little part or lot with the first.

PART III

LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL DRAMA IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

BEFORE IBSEN

T W. Robertson—Oscar Wilde—Sir Arthur Pinero—Henry Arthur Jones—Sydney Grundy—Charles Haddon Chambers—R. C. Carton—H. V. Esmond.

By some critics, Professor Saintsbury among them, it is asserted that the connection between literature and the theatre is, in the main, slight, and that modern drama in particular can only be fruitfully approached from the vantage-point of a seat in the stalls. Even the buoyant optimism of Mr. John Palmer can only lead him to speak of recent developments as a "movement which has brought the English theatre within measurable distance of an alliance with English letters." A nice point of distinction is often involved in an attempt to differentiate between that drama which bears the insignia of literature and that which is merely of the stage stagey; but dramatic writing must obviously fall, either unquestionably or with qualification, into three compartments—that in which the author thinks primarily of histrionic effect, that in which he is first a man of letters, and lastly into the class of enduring drama in which literary and theatrical expression are met together as brother and sister. The best kind of drama is that which gives its proper pleasure and has its separate yet consonant value whether as read or acted; and, thus regarded, English drama has enjoyed three literary periods, the Elizabethan, the Caroline and the Georgian, by which last is intended the comedy of Goldsmith and Sheridan. During the greater part of the nineteenth century the play that could be acted and read, one and the other, without loss in either case, was a phenomenon not to be found. In its last quarter, however, the stigma was removed by the wit of Oscar Wilde, and a little later foreign influences, chiefly coming by the

way of Ibsen, set a style and a form for younger writers with ideas and gifts of expression—St. John Hankin, Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Granville Barker and Stanley Houghton among them. The plays of these writers depend upon matter, form and expression, not upon the producer or the actor, and they have therefore a literary quality which may be enhanced but cannot be changed by the theatre. The matter and the expression of Shakespeare, Wycherley and Sheridan makes them masters not servants of the stage, and, in a like but far weaker degree, literary expression has in these latter days made some part of dramatic writing independent of the theatrical manager and his company. Shakespeare, however produced, would still have something left to him; and no acting could wholly destroy the wit of *Lady Windermere's Fan* or *How He Lied to Her Husband.*

Three literary periods in the story of English drama have been noted, and of these only one is poetical. The world's great drama is and must always be clothed in poetry—Ibsen the protagonist of bald prose is only truly great in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*—but in England since the age of Shakespeare poetical drama has come far short of victory. The greater and the lesser poets of the nineteenth century essayed poetic drama, and none with entire fulfilment of his intention. Shelley and Beddoes have left behind them the greatest dramatic poetry of the century, but *The Cenci* (1819) for plain reasons is not for the stage, and *Death's Jest Book* (1850) is splendidly imaginative dramatic poetry without coherence or plot. Others—Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer Lytton, Sir Henry Taylor,—in the earlier half of that century, were not without power, but their work in poetic drama is now chiefly of interest to the student. Tennyson, certainly, was not at his best in drama, though this part of his work has been thoughtlessly belittled, for *Becket* (1884) and *The Cup* (1884) possessed a strong dramatic quality, and his plays showed that he could make to live again the story of the past. Browning's instinct for the dramatic rendering of life stopped short with the monologue, save for *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843), in which he succeeded in weaving his speeches into genuine dialogue and combining that dialogue with dramatic action, albeit action a little pre-

posterous. Swinburne's experiments with historic drama in *Chastelard* (1865), *Bothwell* (1874) and *Mary Stuart* (1881) were fated to failure in the case of a poet whose genius was purely lyrical and ill-adapted to the comprehension of individual character. The partial successes of these poets serve only to throw into higher relief the general inability to create again in England poetic drama. The more recent attempts of Stephen Phillips equally belong to the story of poetry not drama, for he did nothing to give to dramatic writing a new meaning and a new impulse.

T. W. Robertson, 1829–1871

But if the drama of poetry has failed the drama of prose has achieved latterly a literary quality which has been much to seek throughout several generations of writers. A new spirit came first with Oscar Wilde, who owed his inspiration chiefly to his native wit, and after to Sheridan and French models. But Wilde left no successor, and the strongest influence upon original English drama within the last quarter of a century has come through the realistic and intellectual drama of Ibsen, Hauptmann and Schnitzler, till this type of dreary realism found its culmination in the aridity of Mr. Galsworthy. Before this manifest change there had been, it is true, a moving among the dry bones, which may be accounted a reaction, in weariness and disgust, against the long-drawn age of adaptation from the French. The removal in 1843 of a monopoly in the production of legitimate drama granted to Drury Lane and Covent Garden led to a rapid increase in the number of theatres and a demand for new plays, a demand which was met for nearly forty years by adaptation from the French, an art in which Sydney Grundy, only recently dead, was peculiarly proficient. During this period original English drama ceased to exist. In acted comedy T. W. Robertson is commonly noted as the inaugurator of a new drama of real life; and after the reign of borrowed melodrama and farce his plays have, at least, the merit of individuality. The son of a provincial actor Robertson knew the stage from childhood. For many years he led a wandering and troubled life, not often eating well or dressing finely, supporting himself without great success by writing for

the magazines and the stage. He first reaped the reward of his labours and trials with *Society* (1865). This was the beginning not only of his success but that of the Bancrofts and the little Prince of Wales's Theatre. *Society* was quickly followed by *Ours* (1866), *Caste* (1867), *School* (1869) and other plays which were ridiculed as "cup-and-saucer" comedy. The realism of Robertson to his own age appeared absurd; to us it is artificial; for his knowledge of life was almost entirely limited to the world of Bohemia where he had been born; outside that region he guesses and guesses wrongly. His psychology is no more than the emphasis of one or two dominant traits in a character; and his dialogue is largely modelled to amuse by swiftness and repartee rather than to give the illusion of the monotonous round. Nevertheless in contrast with the drama that went before Robertson was a true innovator, a simple man who looked sincerely at life and attempted to render the English world he saw.

The plays of Robertson were as a prophesying in the wilderness. But after him original English drama was slow in coming. During the 'seventies Irving rose to fame as an actor; but as a manager he has hardly any importance save as a producer of Tennyson's plays. The Bancrofts, after the death of Robertson, fell back upon English classics and translations from the French, and the faint promise of a new English comedy seemed to die without fulfilment. Even in the following decade Gilbert, the brilliantly gifted writer of fantasies, H. J. Byron, Tom Taylor and Charles Reade all produced adaptations from the French. Nevertheless, about this time, despite a temporary obscuration, a change was afoot. First, Wilde set a new example in the writing of comedy, brilliant, paradoxical, self-conscious, for after him it was impossible for any young writer to fall back upon the stereotyped theatrical manner, and, secondly, came the overpowering influence of Ibsen, which is still, if less forcibly, working its will upon English drama. These new impulses were virtually synchronous.

In a sense the influence of Wilde's comedies has been greater than their deserts. As drama they are a diploma example of the wreck of art upon theory. And this Wilde had the wit to see, for he admitted that his

plays were not good. In stagecraft they are weak, though written at a time when Wilde might have learned of Ibsen; and they contain little true character-drawing, for epigram is distributed indiscriminately to all the characters. The practice at its worst is well illustrated in the third act of *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892). The scintillation of epigram between the four men who are talking in Lord Darlington's rooms is like nothing so much as an accident among fireworks. On the whole, however, this is the most human of Wilde's plays. The figures of Lord Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne have greater verisimilitude than have most of his types. *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) is brilliant and actable, but all the characters are puppets. *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) illustrates Wilde's contempt for or ignorance of stagecraft. The *longueurs* of the dialogue lead up lamely and haltingly, without pretence of dramatic action, to the crisis. *An Ideal Husband* (1895), with its theme—the honoured public servant who discovers that his youthful crime is about to be divulged—is more dramatic; but the plot is ill-conducted and even the saving grace of brilliance has largely departed from this play which was being performed at the time of Wilde's downfall.

Oscar Wilde, 1856–1900.

Wilde's comedies held London spellbound and brought the author wealth and fame. They can always be played, just as Sheridan is always actable, but in neither care have we great comedy. The humour of these intellectual comedies lies in inessentials. Wilde held that men and women differ from each other only in accidents; and in this belief his comedies were written. The truth is conversely that accidents may vary in time and place, while in any given time and place they are approximately the same for all, but that the character of individual men and women is outside time and place and their own control—and in this region lies the source of drama. Wilde's plays are based upon a shallow theory, and his character-drawing is therefore negligible. Nevertheless, for what they were, his comedies worked a great change, for Wilde wrote in spoken English and not the jargon of the stage. Furthermore his puppets, though their relationship with the living type was often slight, were no marionettes of

the theatre, they represented an individual reading of the social world. Wilde's comedies, with all their faults, were native to himself, sincere in a perverse way, and they had their effect in abolishing the comedy manufactured by rote.

More important by far was the gradual mastery of Ibsen. In the early 'seventies Mr. Gosse introduced him to England, explained his plays and the greatness and significance of his genius; but it was to the ordinary reader and to the man of letters, not to the theatre, that Mr. Gosse offered his introduction. Translations of his plays began to appear, yet in this country he remained a name and little more for another twenty years. Before the end of these years Mr. Archer did battle for Ibsen; the Independent Theatre played him: and at last in 1893 no less than six of his plays were produced in London. The year may be taken to date a new stage in the story of English drama. Ibsen's influence is chiefly significant of three things—a simpler and more direct stagecraft, an unreasoning worship of the baldest prose and a drab representation of life's monotony, and an intellectual revolt against the accepted in ethics and religion. In individual dramatists this influence took its separate courses, but by nearly all romance was shunned, and the play became realistic, intellectual, busied with the latest and most modern topics, and sometimes tangled with entirely undramatic psychological intricacies. Chief among writers of the new order were and are St. John Hankin, Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Masefield, Mr. Granville Barker, Stanley Houghton; and at a slight remove other and more derivative writers such as Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. Somerset Maugham, Mr. Gilbert Cannan, Miss Githa Sowerby, Mr. B. M. Hastings and, in part, Sir J. M. Barrie are to be placed.

Even the older and established writers fell into line with the new movement. Modifications in the manner of writing of Sir Arthur Pinero, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones and Sydney Grundy are indicative of the change which was coming over the face of the theatrical world. The substance of their plays is of an earlier time, but, and this is especially true of Sir Arthur Pinero, they have so successfully touched up the older melodrama, sensationalism, sentimentalism, romance with a new veneer of

realism that they have succeeded in retaining popularity with audiences who were becoming accustomed to the intellectual drama.

To regard Sir Arthur Pinero as the author of problem plays is to do him an injustice. In some of his plays he has embraced, against his will, the attitude of the social philosopher; but his main intent appears to have been the provision of an entertaining drama creditably modelled to the requirements of the stage. He has not, like Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, delivered impassioned hortations upon the need of a National Theatre and a drama which offers mystery and imagination. His dialogue is neat, the interplay between the characters is rapid, the action moves unflaggingly, the characters are sufficiently pronounced to hold the attention of the average audience, but there is no attempt to treat them with the hyper-psychology of Mr. Barker or Mr. Galsworthy. In a word Sir Arthur Pinero is an excellent playwright, but there is nothing in his *Théâtre* to justify the inclusion of his name with dramatists who are something more than competent society entertainers.

Sir Arthur Pinero readily changes his manner, and his plays, therefore, as readily fall into classes. It has been his attempt to raise farce to the position of comedy, but it cannot be said that his intention has been wholly crowned with success in *The Magistrate* (1883), *The Schoolmistress* (1886), *Dandy Dick* (1887), *The Amazons* (1893) or the later *Mind the Paint Girl* (1912), which are good of their kind, though they illustrate the need in farce of more zest in living than Sir Arthur Pinero can supply. His most characteristic drama, and that undoubtedly nearest his heart, is to be found in the plays of humour and graceful sentiment, *Sweet Lavender* (1888), *The Weaker Sex* (1889) and *Trelawny of the Wells* (1899). The wholly artificial plot of *Sweet Lavender* and its embroidery of pretty sentiment made the play a conspicuous success. It ran for almost two years, was frequently revived, played all over the provinces and translated into several European tongues. *Trelawny of the Wells*, though less a success, owed its qualified popularity to a like weaving of artifice and sentiment. These plays

Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, b. 1855.

fulfil their intention : but they have exercised no influence upon the development of true comedy.

If Sir Arthur Pinero is to be regarded as a serious force in English drama he is to be judged by his problem plays. The first of these, *The Squire* (1881), is lacking even in good stagecraft, and the theme is stultified by a meaningless solution. A young couple marry only to find that the first wife is living. The troublesome first wife is removed by death ; and so the knot is cut, leaving the problem where it was before. *The Profligate* (1889), which turns upon the old story of the woman who marries the rake in place of the virtuous lover, is similarly solved by the death of the profligate ; and all things remain as they were, for the ordeal is removed, not endured. But these, though more serious in intention than Sir Arthur Pinero's earlier plays, are, in their class, secondary to *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893) and *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895), which were written to meet the new craving for realistic problem plays aroused by the advent of Ibsen in England. In the earlier play of the two Aubrey Tanqueray marries Paula, well aware that she is a woman equipped with a past, in the hope that the past may be forgotten and the future irradiated with blissful love. Perhaps the best feature of the play is that the development of the tragedy, as always in life, is based upon a complexity of concurring causes ; but, as in *The Profligate*, so again the author misses his road and takes a wrong turning. The spring of the disaster, ending in Paula's suicide, lies neither in the past nor in her character, but dramatically in the mistaken drawing of Aubrey. The man who chose to marry Paula with open eyes could not be the pompous and chilly individual of the last three acts. A reasonably generous attitude on his part would have saved Paula. Her circumstances are so peculiar that the moral of the play is lost. If *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* betrays the gradually increasing influence of Ibsen, it lies not in better construction, but rather in the character of Agnes, who shows traces of Ibsen's Agnes, Rita, Ellida and Rebecca, while Lucas Cleeve is comparable to the dull and conventional type of man marked by Tesman and Helmer. Again as a problem play this goes astray. Had Lucas

been a normal man there was no reason why his union with Mrs. Ebbsmith should not have been happy. He is not. Now abnormalities find their way into the police court; the essential problems of life belong to all men, and thus to art and religion. Sir Arthur Pinero's problem plays rest on unlikely conditions and improbable solutions; and thus their moral significance is lost. The Shakespearean treatment of knotty ethical points is full-blooded: this is skinny and worn.

Sir Arthur Pinero's later plays, such as *The Gay Lord Quex* (1899), *Iris* (1901), *Letty* (1903) and *His House in Order* (1906) are examples of good construction. They present manners rather than problems, and without any marked distinction in treatment. They are the work of an accomplished playwright who understands the limitations of stage production; and, therefore, though eminently actable, their literary quality is slight, and their influence upon the work of others is negligible.

It is not Sir Arthur Pinero's fault nor a ground of contrition that he has survived his age; but it may be a cause of regret that his work is almost entirely without the personal note which sometimes distinguishes the writing of even those lesser dramatists, who, likewise, have no influence upon the development of drama. An extreme sensitiveness to the vagaries of public taste and fashion has ruled his method of composition. He is an admirable story-teller, and the stage has been for him the means of presenting good stories well told. In this art he has rarely failed. That he fails as a student of character, that he never carries any play of serious intention, if *Iris* be excepted, to a convincing *dénouement*, militates not at all against his plays considered as exercises in the art of story-telling. Sir Arthur Pinero is for the stage what the good tale-writer is for the monthly magazine. If he writes farce or sentiment he entertains and pleases, if he writes more serious drama he holds the attention, though he may fail to command the assent of the imagination; for he cannot make us feel that drama concerns the life of the race more than the life of the individual. Paula Tanqueray and Mrs. Ebbsmith remain individuals. Synge cannot tell a story as clearly as Sir Arthur Pinero; but he can say much more that is important.

Despite these limitations his drama is not the product of the study, for he draws upon life: and from life only with greater consistency than Ibsen. He is, however, restricted by the want of a large imagination and his slender equipment as a psychologist. Within a certain range he understands individual character; beyond that range he uses the sighting of an admirable stagecraft, and, thus, the further his range the less certain he is to reach his mark. His mind is practical rather than imaginative; his themes, therefore, are direct and prosaic, sometimes pleasantly sentimental but never poetic. All his work is self-conscious; in construction often nearly impeccable, in dialogue swift and decisive, in characterisation not glaringly bad. But the whole drama of Sir Arthur Pinero stands for no significant fact. It is an excellent mirror of changes in public taste.

Henry Arthur Jones, b. 1851.

And Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, although his art is more personal and individual, likewise posits nothing that is deeply-founded. He has consistently preached a serious intention; and in innumerable lectures and essays he has expounded his aims. He refuses to regard the drama only as a means of popular amusement, although he recognises that it can instruct but incidentally; he claims the right to portray all aspects of life; and he is resolved to combat modern pessimistic realism by "the representation of the more imaginative and mysterious aspects of human life."

It is no disparagement of Mr. Jones to say that his performance is less than his ideal. This is the fate of all save those who are of no account. But in his drama it is difficult to perceive wherein lies that quality of his art which tends to the fulfilment of his ideals. There is no largeness in his outlook, and, despite his pretensions to reveal the spiritual and mysterious, a strain of the commonplace runs through all his work. His first popular piece, *The Silver King* (1882), made no profession to be other than melodrama, and by this we are not justified in judging the author. Liberated by the success of the play he turned to please himself in *Saints and Sinners* (1884), a picture of middle-class life and religion in a country town, which, for reasons difficult now to discover, excited

public protest against the representation of religion on the stage. In itself the play labours under the faults of the time in which it was written—it is melodramatic to a degree—Letty is the sweet heroine, happily saved from ruin by the dear old father; Captain Fanshawe is as conventional a villain as ever strode upon the boards; George Kingsmill, the stalwart and true lover, is a bad edition of Adam Bede, and Fanshawe is a meagre copy of Donnithorne. Adventitious aids in the shape of coincidence, soliloquies, the reappearance of long-lost persons to save or ruin the situation, are freely employed. And it is difficult to discover the motive of the play. In the acted version George, the true lover, and Letty, the fallen girl, are happily united; in the printed version Letty dies. In either case the mistake is one that Sir Arthur Pinero would likewise have followed. We are only faced with a moral problem of difficulty if Letty lives. Mr. Jones is no more able to clinch his play than Oliver Goldsmith his *Vicar of Wakefield*, of which *Saints and Sinners* is surely a modern version. Goldsmith, however, saves a story intolerably melodramatic in plot by a felicitous humour in characterisation in which Mr. Jones is sadly to seek.

After this, even on Mr. Jones's admission, we have a relapse into melodrama, till we emerge again with *The Middleman* (1889). The object of the play is to satirise the stupid and blundering middleman of capital who exploits the brains of the inventor. Unfortunately for the gift of satire Mr. Jones possesses he only excites our commiseration for the middleman who sinks into a condition of pitiable indigence. *Judah* (1890), extravagantly praised on its first appearance, is an even more inconclusive problem play. *The Case of Rebellious Susan* (1894) is serious comedy treating the theme of the unlovely marriage-tie and a play patently infected by the new demand for realism created by the drama of Ibsen. In these years Mr. Jones gave evidence of a continuous tendency to divest himself of the melodramatic instinct acquired in youth and to advance toward a greater reality. His finest example of the intellectual play of serious import is *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (1900). An element of the artificial is still present, but the treatment of character

is infinitely more true to life than it had been in the earlier plays. Mrs. Dane hides her past: it is discovered by a few though she is cleared in the eyes of the many; yet in the moment which is virtual victory for her the best in her nature triumphs, and she surrenders her chance of happiness with the youth who would marry her for his sake and for his career. The plot is developed with swiftness and stagecraft almost equal to Sir Arthur Pinero at his best; but, unfortunately, Mr. Jones succeeded in ruining the conclusion with a ridiculous little twist in the unnecessary engagement of two elderly characters of the play. The whole ought to have concluded with Mrs. Dane's exit at the window, when she goes back to her past and her child. In none of the more serious plays which followed—*Chance, the Idol* (1902), *White-washing Julia* (1903) or *Joseph Entangled* (1904)—did Mr. Jones rival the measure of truth and reality with which he had invested the story of Mrs. Dane. *Mrs. Dane's Defence* stands for his highest reach in significant and serious drama.

The plays of Mr. Jones, if more individual, are more rough-hewn than those of Sir Arthur Pinero. Even *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, which marks an advance on his ordinary workmanship, blunders when placed by the side of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*. Mr. Jones has little sense of form; and this defect is as apparent in his lectures and his essays as in his plays. Nevertheless he possesses imagination and ideas, and herein is manifestly the superior of Sir Arthur Pinero, who is almost wholly derivative. His mind is more full, but he is by no means as clearly articulate. Nor, again, though he has defended the possibility of literary drama against Bagehot and other detractors, has he a finely developed literary sense. In exactness his dialogue is wanting; his construction, even judging by the standard of effective melodrama, is frequently insecure; his humour is forced; and if he has a larger sympathy than Sir Arthur Pinero with all sorts and conditions of men, his pathos, on the other hand, is hard and metallic. It was his misfortune to be born at a time when English drama laboured under the obsession of French writers and suffered especially from the artifices of Scribe. It is, at least, to the credit

of Mr. Jones that he was, even as a raw young dramatist, fully cognisant of the deplorable condition of contemporary drama. He saw what was needed, but his powers were unequal to providing a true remedy. The work of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones and Sir Arthur Pinero is typical of a transitional period when men are groping their way, not fully aware of the nature of the object they seek. And before either dramatist had fully mastered the use of his instruments his efforts were supplanted by the new drama which came from Norway, a land hitherto unsuspected in the playwright's geography. After a few years in which Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr. Jones attempted to adapt their methods to the new style, they were content to drop back into the older manner and write unblushingly theatrical farces.

Sydney Grundy, 1848–1914.

As an original dramatist Sydney Grundy was of less note. He was not only out of sympathy with later tendencies in drama, he also never outgrew the technique he learned from Scribe and Labiche. His original plays, even the best—*A Fool's Paradise* (1889), *Sowing the Wind* (1893) and *The Greatest of These* (1896)—too obviously laboured under French influences and showed little that was distinctive or individual. He is rather to be remembered by his adaptations. Of these the most successful was *A Pair of Spectacles* (1890) based on *Les Petits Oiseaux* of Labiche and Delacour. This and his many other adaptations illustrate his deftness and skill, but they have no place in the history of the development of drama.

Charles Haddon Chambers, b. 1860.

And it is only necessary here to dismiss with a brief notice two or three other writers of unambitious comedy and farce who have for a number of years retained their popularity. Mr. Charles Haddon Chambers' *Captain Swift* (1888) won a great success. The sensationalism of the stage story of the bushranger who tries to take a place in English society on a return to the home-country and failing shoots himself, may in part account for the favour with which the play met. *The Idler* (1891) was an equally melodramatic piece. In comedy, *The Tyranny of Tears* (1899), for example, Mr. Chambers

shows no peculiar ability. Nor do his later plays, from *The Awakening* (1901) to *Passers-by* (1911), reveal any fresh power or inventiveness. Richard Claude Carton (Mr. R. D. Critchett) won popularity with *Liberty Hall* (1892) in which he borrowed from Goldsmith the melodramatic situation of the rich squire who, in disguise, helps needy relatives before revealing himself. In later plays R. C. Carton abandoned himself to thorough-going farce. *Lady Huntworth's Experiment* (1900) turns upon the experiences of a countess who serves in a vicarage kitchen. *Mr. Preedy and the Countess* (1909) shows the embarrassments of the innocent young man who gives a night's shelter in his bachelor chambers to a vagrant countess. Of such material are his farces woven. And Henry Vernon Esmond (Mr. Henry Vernon Jack) is another popular playwright whose best gift lies with farcical comedy written with no purpose ulterior to the amusement of the audience.

Richard Claude Carton, b. 1853.

Henry Vernon Esmond, b. 1869.

CHAPTER II

AFTER IBSEN

Bernard Shaw—Granville Barker—St. John Hankin—John Galsworthy—Stanley Houghton—Gilbert Cannan—Githa Sowerby—John Masefield.

THE nature of the revolt, inspired by Ibsen, against the older kind of drama has already been indicated so far as a movement of the kind can be stated in a few words. Writers like Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Granville Barker, Mr. Galsworthy, St. John Hankin, assumed that drama in England was fully capable of following the model of drama in Scandinavia and abolishing from the stage whatever in action or word was not an exact copy of events in the house or street. This, in part, was the impossible ideal; but the new impulse communicated itself in differing ways to individual playwrights; and in the case of several, most notably that of Mr. Bernard Shaw, in cultivating the belief that as Ibsen had used drama to instruct the nation in manners and morals this was the chief function of the theatre. Ibsen once protested, and truly, that he had been more a poet and less a social philosopher than most people were ready to recognise. But of this protest little notice has been taken. The enduring greatness of Ibsen lies not in his stagecraft, not in his bald dialogue, not in his didactic propensity, but in that deep-founded current of poetry and mysticism in his nature, which, even in his prose-dramas of social life, he has been unable altogether to obscure. As a poet, unhappily, Ibsen has made little impression upon contemporary drama. He has been understood as an intellectualist, a prophet, a naturalistic painter of life, and it is thus conceived that he has been a dominant force in moulding the younger dramatists of our day. The nature of his influence is only to be seen as it expresses itself in the ideals and work of different disciples, and of these

Mr. Bernard Shaw is, in England, the most significant example. He may himself disclaim discipleship to Ibsen and point instead to Butler or another. And, to do Mr. Shaw justice, his plays are but one illustrative example of the way in which a new tendency may take upon itself surprising developments.

George Bernard Shaw, b. 1856.

When Mr. Bernard Shaw, the young Irishman, first came to London he wrote novels; and it was during this period that the lodestar of efficiency began to shine upon him, and with it came his Socialism, his active membership of the Fabian Society, and his conversion by Karl Marx to a belief that society could be saved from its confusions and untidiness, made neat, orderly and efficient. Ever since he has desired to furbish the world to a high polish. He learned also to abhor romanticism and idealism, which in his eyes only serve to darken counsel in economics and art and dim the brilliant gloss produced by the hard rub of logic and statistical facts. Idealism he pronounces "only a flattering name for romance in politics and morals"; and romanticism he regards as no more than the cant of those who do not possess normal sight. The vision of nine-tenths of mankind is abnormal and defective, and in the remaining tenth stands Mr. George Bernard Shaw as a pattern type of the normal and clear-sighted man. Whatever he cannot understand in faiths which have claimed the allegiance of other men he pronounces due to distorted vision. Unconsciously and with simple-minded sincerity he joined the little army of those who question what is simply because it *is*, and not because it *has been*. Mr. Shaw has glimmerings of sympathy with thought so alien to his own as that of Plato, but he publicly declared himself an atheist at fifteen because the belief in God is still a commonly accepted article of faith. And because Darwin and Huxley were too much with the world he derided science for the inartistic magnitude of its lies, and declared the practice of medicine a modern witchcraft. With a curious blindness to analogy, however, he was able to accept the unrelated statistics of the Fabian Society, while he rejected religion and biology without which they have little meaning and scarcely any

importance. Mr. Sidney Webb has preached the gospel of salvation by force of actual facts patiently collected and carefully tabulated—before these new tables of the law thrones and principalities of inefficiency and wastefulness will one day crumble to the dust. And in the formation of Mr. Shaw's mind as prophet and reformer the Fabian Society, directed by the mathematical gospel of Mr. Sidney Webb, has been a chief source of influence.

The novels of Mr. Shaw's nonage show him feeling his way not only toward expression, but to the discovery of something to express: before he had finished with them he was entering upon his inheritance. For the novel is always with him: his drama, which so often collapses into talk without action, is only the novel transferred to the stage. It is possible that Mr. Shaw would have made a more lasting name for himself had he continued to walk his first path in literature; although, even in fiction, the absence of anything like style would have derogated from his chances of enduring fame. It may be answered that Mr. Shaw's style is sufficient to its purposes and no more can be asked of any writer. But the matter does not rest here, as will be seen later in commenting upon Mr. Shaw's criticism of Shakespeare. As with everything he attempts it is true that his style is efficient and clear; but as the utterance of a strong and original mind it is the most colourless and least individual style ever written. Never was any writer more dependent upon what he says and not upon how he says it. Charm he has none, but brilliance, wit and ideas in sufficiency; and perhaps these are the more valuable to a writer who comes with a message and has always declared himself the dramatist with a moral purpose.

Between the period of his novels and his appearance as a playwright eight or nine years intervened in which Mr. Shaw gave his days to musical and dramatic criticism and his nights to the Fabian Society and Socialist propaganda. He chose for himself the cart and the trumpet, and set up as "a professional man of genius." His criticisms were often marked by an egotism so pronounced that to many they seemed ludicrous and negligible. It was in these years he began to create the "G. B. S." myth,

which is still largely accepted for the real man. It was, in point of fact, only a mask behind which Mr. Shaw hid himself; and long before the public wearied of gazing upon the idol his creator had cast him off save as a jest. But there was meaning in the erection of a large image before which the peoples should bow, for Mr. Shaw was a young man, and in England young men are not listened to with respect unless they are happy in being born to a title. Therefore the young critic blew the trumpet before him when he wrote his weekly articles on music for the *Star* (1888–90) and his dramatic criticism for the *Saturday Review* (1895–98).

When Mr. Bernard Shaw was pushing his way to notoriety as a young dramatic critic Shakespeare had long been dead and Ibsen was living, but their fame was in inverse ratio to their distance from the day. Shakespeare for nearly a century had been a fetish, revered by all as much as he was little known save to the few; Ibsen was a foreign writer of scandalous plays. The fame of Shakespeare was, the fame of Ibsen was not. In subservience to principles which had now become a second habit Mr. Shaw ranged himself on the side of Ibsen and began to smite at that huge idol, Shakespeare. He was well-equipped for his task, for he had known Shakespeare thoroughly long before he had heard of Ibsen, admired him and continued to admire him as he dealt him blows with far greater knowledge and insight than the multitude who decried his sacrilegious onslaughts. The ground of Mr. Shaw's contention was a moral enthusiasm. He saw in Shakespeare a man deficient in inventiveness, ideas and moral faith, in Ibsen a man of thought and a moralist. Shakespeare's power lay in a gift of language and a literary knack. How he said a thing was generally of greater moment than what he said. Judged by the test of intellect and dramatic insight "Ibsen comes out with a double first class, whereas Shakespeare comes out hardly anywhere." To paraphrase Shakespeare in the language of a Blue Book is to empty him of all wit and thought.

Against Mr. Shaw's contention only one objection can be urged—that it is not true. If its truth be admitted it would still be possible to defend Shakespeare against

Ibsen. For, supposing Ibsen to contain any thought of high value, which is doubtful, the banality of his utterance in the prose dramas of social life outvies the tamest drawing-rooms of suburbia. It is in practice impossible to converse with so little light and shade as the drama of Ibsen provides. There is nothing to arrest, and nothing to remember save the general story of each play. We never meet with those flashes of utterance and thought which are unforgettable, wherein more is said than words were fashioned to say. Ibsen and Mr. Shaw use words merely as instruments of logical expression and set the potential use of language aside. Now even Mr. Shaw will not deny that drama is a branch of literature and a Blue Book is not. And literature consists not in the use of language to express ideas, but in the use of a language that is invested by context and analogy with a special power, an unexpected significance. Where ideas combine with literary gift there is the highest literature; but if the attribution of literary gift involve, as it certainly must, a potency of implication in the use of language, then it is impossible for the literary gift to exist apart from language, and to assign Shakespeare a literary gift while denying him intellectual insight is a contradiction in terms. Ibsen possessed a high literary gift. Unfortunately in his social plays he sacrificed it to the fetish of intellectual drama, and in these he succeeded in showing less insight into character than in his two great poetic dramas where he allowed full play to the genius of poetry which was given to him in great measure. More might be said to exhibit the contradictory nature of Mr. Shaw's main contention in the controversy of Shakespeare against Ibsen. The discussion is, however, chiefly valuable as a commentary upon Mr. Bernard Shaw's own plays. In his view Ibsen is great because he writes drama that is intellectual and moral, and Mr. Shaw, his disciple, is great because he writes plays with a moral purpose. Shakespeare, the pessimist, cries "Out, out, brief candle!" because he lacks moral faith: Shaw, the moralist, is also an optimist.

Not literary expression, not even characterisation does Mr. Shaw consider the chief thing, but the lesson conveyed by drama. Upon his theory a drama is an acted

tract—the lesson the audience carries away is the important matter. "I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions." And if by morality we understand no more than a congruity with established manners and customs then Mr. Shaw may fitly be described as "a specialist in immoral and heretical plays." "My reputation," he says, "has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals."

His first play began as an attempt at collaboration with Mr. William Archer, Mr. Archer providing the plot and Mr. Shaw the dialogue. But in the early stages the plot was exhausted and Mr. Shaw continued upon his own course. *Widowers' Houses* was produced by the Independent Theatre in 1892. It is definitely a play with a moral purpose, for it is an indictment of the thousands of worthy and complacent people who live comfortably upon independent incomes without troubling to inquire how those incomes are made. *Widowers' Houses* is a genuine problem play; for it raises a question and does not lay it with any clearly constructed alternative. And constructive Mr. Shaw always attempts to be. Trench falls in love with Blanche, the daughter of Sartorious, an owner of slum property, but breaks off the engagement in horror upon learning the source of his future wife's income. He has only, however, to face another and a ruder shock in the discovery that his own income comes from the same source. Time reduces him to an unwilling acceptance of things as they are, and the slum property is still in existence when he returns to the arms of Blanche Sartorious.

Mr. Bernard Shaw made a good beginning with this play. The dialogue is incisive, moves rapidly, and carries forward the action of the drama without the involutions and digressions of his later plays. The characters do not attract us; nor are they meant to be other than objectionable, with the exception of Blanche, who, however, only illustrates the inability of the author, already apparent in the novels, to draw a woman. So far from representing a strong-natured but unsophisticated girl Blanche is a mere outline sketch. Ibsen's masculine types are far inferior to his women; Mr. Shaw's men are better than their

wives, sisters and daughters. Julia and Grace, for example, in *The Philanderer* (1893) are fictitious pieces of characterisation; and the former is only interesting as the first example in Mr. Shaw's drama of those women who in the "sex business" take the initiative and pursue the men. This play was written immediately after *Widowers' Houses*, but its technique was unsuitable to the company of Mr. Grein, who had produced the first play, and the author replaced it with *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, which was censored. The ineptitude of the ban laid upon this play passes belief. The idea underlying it is akin to the thought of *Widowers' Houses*. A young girl, carefully shielded, learns the story of her mother's past. The treatment of a hateful subject is serious, and, as a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* (April, 1905) declared with justice, "A play with a finer moral determination than *Mrs. Warren's Profession* has not been produced in Europe during the last twenty years."

The three plays just named were printed in volume form as *Plays Unpleasant* together with a companion volume of *Plays Pleasant* (1898). In the volume of *Plays Pleasant* came *Arms and the Man*, produced in 1894, *Candida* (1897), *You Never Can Tell* (1900) and the one-act *Man of Destiny* (1897). The first of these, described by Brandes as "a masterpiece whether it is considered from the psychological or the purely theoretical point of view," has proved one of the most successful of Mr. Shaw's plays upon the stage, though it can scarcely be ranked with his more important compositions. Probably it has generally been taken for farcical comedy and thoughtlessly accepted by the majority of every audience which has seen it performed. Its witty satire upon the fictitious glory of war and the romantic idealism of woman has been disregarded, and the success of the play, in a popular sense, lies in the ease with which any serious intention it possesses may be passed over and a good play left in the residue when all Shavian ideas and doctrines have been eliminated. Of the other plays in the same volume *You Never Can Tell* is the least purposeful and perhaps the most unsatisfactory of the longer pieces. But within the same covers is *Candida*, the author's greatest success, whether we have regard to the

technique and art of the piece, its character-drawing or the directness of its exposition of ideas. *Candida* is true drama and not clever journalism adapted to the stage, as some of Mr. Shaw's plays tend to be. Its chief characters, Morell, clergyman and Christian Socialist, Candida, his wife, and Eugene Marchbanks, the dreamy poet, are among the best and most convincing of Mr. Bernard Shaw's delineations of the individual. Candida, placed between the two men, the strong, masterful, hardworking, famous and popularly applauded clergyman and the dreamy, unpractical poet, chooses to remain with her husband, to be to him wife, mother and sisters, because he has the most need of her and is the weaker of the two.

> "What I am you have made me with the labour of your hands" [says Morell to his wife]. "You are my wife, my mother, my sisters: you are the sum of all loving care to me."
>
> CANDIDA (*in his arms, smiling to Eugene*). Am I your mother and sisters to you, Eugene?
>
> MARCHBANKS (*rising with a fierce gesture of disgust*). Ah, never. Out, then, into the night with me!

The whole play is a sincere, human and truthful piece of work, dramatically conceived and dramatically executed. It is the one play in which Mr. Shaw's failure with women is not apparent. Candida and Proserpine Garnett, the typist, are both convincing.

The volume of *Three Plays for Puritans* (1900) contained *The Devil's Disciple, Cæsar and Cleopatra* and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion;* and of none of these can it be pretended that it takes a high place among the plays. *The Devil's Disciple* begins as admirable melodrama, only to be ruined by a conclusion in tedious farce. *Cæsar and Cleopatra* was offered as an offset to Shakespeare's picture of Julius Cæsar, but the play is entirely undramatic, its spectacular possibilities are damaged by prolix dialogue, and in the conclusion we feel, as Borsa has happily remarked, "Cæsar and Cleopatra have a great deal to do in five long acts to avoid falling in love with each other." *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* may be placed with *You Never Can Tell* as one of the least significant and interesting of Mr. Shaw's plays.

Man and Superman (1905) is his longest and most philosophical play. It resolves itself largely into talk which cannot be rendered effectively on the stage, and the long argument in the third act between Don Juan, the Devil and the Statue may be read apart from the play without loss, if with a consciousness that the ideas might have been given more effectively in another form. The play as a whole embodies a favourite thesis of the author, that in the "sex business" woman pursues and man is the prey.

From this date forward the plays tend to fall into one of two classes—plays of satirical dialogue without action or plays of undisguised buffoonery sharpened with wit. In the former class may be placed *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), which satirises English misconception of Ireland and, in consequence, the English character, than which nothing is more ridiculous in Mr. Shaw's eyes, *Major Barbara* (1905), which attacks conventional systems of charity, *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906), vigorous satire upon the medical profession, *The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet* (1909), "a religious tract in dramatic form," which met with the ban of the censor, and *Getting Married* (1908), which explains its theme in its title, and is a comedy upon the intolerable character of marriage as still practised among civilised nations. In the second class fall *Fanny's First Play* (1911), an amusing play in lighter mood with an induction and epilogue in which dramatic critics are satirised, *Pygmalion* (1914), which is excellent farce, and *Great Catherine* (1913) in which once more the Englishman is satirised with undiluted buffoonery.

After he had been discovered abroad Mr. Bernard Shaw was for long years a prophet without honour in his own country. The dramatic critic belittled the art of his plays; the audience at the theatre threw up its hands in horror at his revolutionary ideas or declared petulantly that it was impossible to take seriously a man who delighted in a firework display of unintelligible paradox. His plays were comparatively little seen in London till a series was produced at the Court Theatre in 1905–6. But Mr. Shaw has long ceased seriously to shock the middle classes. Whether his ideas have become agreeable or not the manner of them is well known, and since

1905, the year of *Man and Superman*, he has not written anything which carries forward his propaganda or adds intrinsically to the importance of his work; and public opinion has divided itself into the beliefs that either Mr. Shaw is tremendously in earnest or that he does not care to be intelligible and merely laughs at himself. The theory which holds that he is an obscure, paradoxical and unintelligible writer is difficult of confirmation. Never was the meaning of any writer more unmistakable, at least in his prefaces, for those may be forgiven who are occasionally in some doubt of his intention in the plays. Of the sincerity and purposefulness of Mr. Bernard Shaw's writing there can be no manner of doubt. He has finally won his place because he is sincere and has a constructive message to deliver. Nobody who has strong convictions can hide his light under a bushel; and Mr. Shaw has powerful convictions and no passion for self-effacement. Sometimes he appears to regard himself as a man whose work is to be purely destructive; he is, nevertheless, governed by a constructive faith and creed. In his plays, essays, prefaces and tracts he has given himself without stint to the conversion of the country to his own opinions, and his opinions embody themselves in outward guise in a society which has joyfully accepted a rule of thumb adherence to lessons deduced from the statistical tables of Mr. Sidney Webb, a society governed by cold intellect, unweakened by romanticism, idealism or sentiment.

Thus it follows that Mr. Bernard Shaw sees life and portrays it in his drama through the mists of Fabian theory and argument. His temper is matter-of-fact: his emotions, and he is not without them, are cowed by an aggressive intellect. There is no room in his world for that kindliness, simple affection, bright-eyed or tearful sentiment which do most to redeem life and save human existence from the intolerable. Nearly every man and woman in love becomes sentimental and romantic: there is no sentiment in the vigorous lovers of Mr. Shaw. Julia Craven, Ann Whitefield, even Candida, the most human of his women, have no illusions; and the men whom they protect or love are flippant, cynical, coldly ratiocinative, or, if they give way to sentiment, it is only to betray themselves into a disadvantage. On Shavian principles

General Boxer, in *Getting Married*, is the beau ideal of the suitor. He protests to the woman who repeatedly has refused him that she cannot be without the desire for children or the satisfaction of the natural appetites. And, because Mr. Shaw's vision of life is abnormally intellectual, he has rendered one side of woman's nature as it has never been represented on the stage before; for woman is at once more practical and more emotional than man. The practical instincts of woman he has seized admirably; her emotional sophistries and subtleties he has completely missed, and his feminine characterisations are, therefore, but profiles. And, in greater or less degree, the indictment is applicable to the male characters of the plays. Keegan, the crazy mystic of *John Bull's Other Island*, offers an exception to a rule which makes us regret that the accident which helped the author on this occasion does not more often befall him. But, for the greater part, his characters are used as exponents of ideas; and the habit has grown upon him, till in several of the later plays the dialogue has lost all character and individuality, resolving itself into a tossing from mouth to mouth of a contention between advanced notions and shocked prejudices. Each drama is written to elucidate a thesis, which is stated in a lengthy preface of greater interest and composed with greater cogency than the play. His characters, therefore, only too often remain as tags to everyday topics. Nobody, it is true, would deny dramatic insight and the gift of sincere characterisation to the author of *Candida* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession;* but even these suffer from that credulous modernity and faith in the vulgar illusions of the actual which overpower the humanity of the greater part of Mr. Shaw's drama and distort it into the clever young man's journalism given a new garment. In later years the prefaces are the chief matter and the plays follow as an illustrative comment: and the prefaces are merely exceedingly good journalism. The plays, likewise, are acted leaders, introducing the special theories of a party. They thus lack artistic restraint. The exaggerations in character-drawing and management of the action are as preposterous as in Dickens and Ibsen, and less illusive.

Coleridge once declared his admiration of the assertive young man whose dogmatisms ran in one direction, even though they might be plainly wrong. And clearly defined thought, a consistent tendency in action, an undeviating ideal in art, must always win not only respect but achieve some end in influencing other workers in the same field. Even when the manner or mannerism is difficult of imitation and possibly even a snare to the beginner something will be made of it if that mannerism or method be followed consistently. To their own damage young novelists have followed in the way of Henry James; and many of those who have more wisely avoided his way have not escaped that general manner of hovering on the wing about the mental processes of the characters portrayed. The widely diffused resolution of the dramatic or narrative representation of life into a kind of psychometric is largely due to Henry James. Mr. Granville Barker was probably in no way a conscious disciple of the American novelist, but his prolix, involved and somewhat chilling intellectual drama is in the same class of workmanship as Henry James's novels. Mr. Barker's plays have also affinities with those of Mr. Bernard Shaw: and the bare realism of Ibsen has influenced him, although he has learned no lessons in the art of form from Ibsen, who never transgresses against the dramatic virtue of succinctness and relevance. When a very young man Mr. Barker had in him the gifts and graces of poetry and romance, as *The Marrying of Ann Leete* (1901) plainly showed. But he was unfortunately, against his better nature, inspired with an enthusiasm for intellectual and realistic drama; and when, in conjunction with Mr. Vedrenne, he gained control of the Court Theatre the plays he preferred to produce were those of Ibsen, Hauptmann, Schnitzler, Mr. Shaw, Mr. Galsworthy and St. John Hankin. And his own plays, without abandoning the detailed psychology already manifest in *The Marrying of Ann Leete*, adopted in addition the methods of the realists. He became one of the naturalists, elaborately painful in his conception of character and rendering of dialogue, whether trivial or impassioned,

Harley Granville Barker, b. 1877.

continually probing the mind, careless of movement and action. In at least two of his plays, *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905) and *The Madras House* (1910), there seems no special reason why they should open at the particular stage of the story the author chooses, and certainly none why they should not end earlier or later with equal advantage. And *Waste* (1907) and *The Marrying of Ann Leete* are only a little less inconclusive.

Mr. Barker adopted for his manner as a playwright a passionless intellectual impressionism. The picture of the well-to-do shopkeeper's home and family in the first act of *The Madras House* is a striking piece of work. The inanimate dialogue, the insipid questions, the repetitions of phrase, exactly render the atmosphere of the house, the character of the inmates and the whole tradition of their lives. The inconsequence of the dialogue in this act, however, is not merely a faithful rendering of what happens in middle-class households, it is a part of Mr. Barker's adopted manner; and therefore he is here eminently successful. But in the larger part of his drama this habit of prolix involution in dialogue is his greatest fault. It is talk, and not always talk that is relevant or significant. In these plays Mr. Barker exactly transfers life to the stage; but he interprets nothing. The street and the counting-house are almost more exegetical of themselves.

The Voysey Inheritance depicts the inheritance by Edward Voysey and other members of the family of debts incurred by the elder Mr. Voysey, who has swindled his clients of their money. It offers a curiously interesting picture of perturbations in the minds of different members of the family; but, as it began in the middle of the story, it breaks off without development, and nothing is left to us. *Waste* turns upon the discovery of an intrigue which injures the career of an aspiring politician, a theme often used, and employed in a different way by Stanley Houghton in *Trust the People*. *The Madras House* has scarcely any narrative or dramatic movement that can be stated—it is a picture of middle-class people connected with a large metropolitan drapery establishment. In these plays Mr. Barker is at little pains to dramatise any of his themes: a minutely intellectual psychology is his

purpose, and we are led to suspect that he would have succeeded better had he cast his plays in the form of the novel. The narrative contained in the stage directions and descriptions of character are frequently more illuminating than the dialogue. Thus, when we are told of Dr. Wedgecroft that he "squeezes Miss Trebell's hand with an air of fearless affection which is . . . not the least lovable," and of Mr. Brigstock that he is "as agitated as his wife, and as he has no nervous force to be agitated with is in a greater state of wretchedness" we conceive the whole character of the individual in either case. More is told us here than in all the dialogue or dramatic movement. In direct narrative and in impersonal description Mr. Barker would probably have been completely successful. His plays, like those of Mr. Bernard Shaw, are really novels on the stage. Their tense psychological atmosphere, the length of their dialogue, the introduction of unrelated discussions on political and social topics, the absence of movement make them difficult of representa tion. Further, they are comparatively passionless; the tension is coldly intellectual and apt to leave the audience jaded. Mr. Barker pores over his characters with the exact patience of the bacteriologist in his laboratory; Mr. Galsworthy analyses with the matter-of-factness of the practising barrister; Mr. Shaw imports his own personality into every situation.

In his three more important plays Mr. Barker has followed an ideal and method to which he was not born. But there are signs in his productions of Shakespeare and in one or two curtain-raisers in which he has collaborated that his natural self is returning. He is still a young man; and his work as a playwright hitherto can hardly be regarded as a safe indication of his future development.

St. John Hankin was a few years older than Mr. Granville Barker, but his appearance as a dramatist came later. His first successful play, *The Return of the Prodigal*, was produced by the Vedrenne-Barker management at the Court Theatre in 1905. Before this he had been occupied with journalism both in London and Calcutta, although playwriting was always his ambition. The first of his plays to be acted was *The*

St. John Emile Clavering Hankin, 1869–1909.

Two Mr. Wetherbys, which was privately performed by the Stage Society in 1903. Shortly after this ill-health compelled him to retire from London life, and from his seclusion in the country he produced those plays which have given him a place in the English world of letters which is scarcely likely to be lost.

In St. John Hankin's satire on middle-class standards of morality we may trace the influence of Mr. Bernard Shaw; but he showed his originality in his absolute freedom from the illusions and sentiments which Mr. Shaw has unconsciously cherished. St. John Hankin's comedies close with the triumph of the villain. This was his form of protest against the happy ending, which, if more hackneyed, is at least as true a conception as the unhappy ending, for the good man may, on the whole, be counted to win the best that is in life. His plays naturally met with but limited favour from a public who preferred the happy ending and found Hankin's cynical wit distasteful.

St. John Hankin based his writing upon a theory and a theory in which he believed with fervour. He excluded all sentiment and sham; he had no sympathy with ecstatic moralities and ideals, holding with Butler that the perfectly virtuous man was as offensive to God as the unrighteous and wicked man who erred too far on the other side. His drama is the drama of uncompromising realism, his philosophy of life a cynical common sense. The prodigal who arises and comes home to his father after wasting the thousand pounds with which he was packed off to Australia displays no spirit of repentance. He regards it as a matter of temperament and circumstance that his father and elder brother prefer to live respectably at home and work hard at the factory amassing wealth. For the prodigal this is impossible; his nature forbids it. His father has brought him into the world; he demands a yearly allowance for doing nothing —and gets it.

The motives of his other plays are similar in general character. Lady Denison, who adopts and puts into practice the charitable and philanthropic schemes of the idealist, Basil Hylton, discovers that she opens the gates to misdemeanours and embarrassing complications with-

out benefiting anyone. Altruistic philanthropy, in St. John Hankin's eyes, was as likely to do harm as good. Pride of race and generations of tenure on one spot have weakened the strength and will-power of individual members of a family. The daughter who chooses to be a mother without marrying and to earn her living by keeping a hat shop in London is better morally than her unadventurous and weak relatives who stay at home. These are the plot-ideas which Hankin chose; and as an example of merciless realism *The Last of the De Mullins* (1908) is his pattern-play. It is throughout a tense piece of writing; and, if it preaches a moral, the naturalness of the characters and their environment obscures this fact. It is a picture of life with its strange inversions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, the things that are fitting and the things that are not. We can sympathise with the passionate and excited eloquence of old De Mullin when he storms at the daughter who has smirched the family honour by bearing a child out of wedlock and soiled her hands with a trade. A man is in the right to love the place where his forefathers have lived for generations; but Janet De Mullin is also right when she cries impatiently—

> "You seem to think there's some peculiar virtue about always living in the same place. I believe in people uprooting themselves and doing something with their lives."

And, for once, Hankin loses his cold restraint when he allows Janet, the unwedded mother, to cry—

> "To know that a child is your very own, is a part of you. That you have faced sickness and pain and death itself for it. That it is yours and nothing can take it from you because no one can understand its wants as you do. To feel its soft breath on your cheek, to soothe it when it is fretful and still it when it cries, that is motherhood and that is glorious."

But, as a rule, there is little passion in St. John Hankin's writing. He studies his characters and their conventional motives in the spirit of the dispassionate analyst. *The Last of the De Mullins* is a stronger and more emotional play than the others, because in it Hankin was obviously

constrained to utter himself; and for a like reason *The Return of the Prodigal* is but little inferior to it in force and dramatic intensity. The subject of *The Charity that Began at Home* (1906) does not easily admit of forcible character-drawing, and the play is the least successful of his works. *The Cassilis Engagement* (1907) was the most popular of his plays because it was the least rebellious, and it is also excellently adapted to lively representation on the stage. Nevertheless in theme and humour it is less characteristic of Hankin than anything of equal length he wrote.

Hankin's stagecraft is admirable; his dialogue is a pattern of prose-dialogue for drama of modern life. He makes no mistake in being too brilliant or witty, nor does he strain, with Ibsen and some of his followers, at prosaic dullness below the level of middle-class drawing-rooms. His men and women talk as they would talk, their thoughts come in an unforced sequence and the dialogue flows with natural ease. If there be any serious fault in Hankin's work it is that he is too detached, too analytical, too aloof from his characters. And, therefore, in the more serious crises of life he misses his way. With one or two exceptions his characters do not spring into fire when they ought. But the coldly impersonal note of his drama may be largely explained by the ill-health which troubled him for many years.

John Galsworthy, b. 1867.

One cause of Ibsen's success with the average audience which thinks but is not intellectual over-much was his incessant modernity, his constant discussion of such questions as sex-relationship, woman's position in the social scale, the place of idealism in politics, the disease of nervous hysteria and that host of other embarrassments which trouble us more than they did our forefathers. The types Ibsen continually reproduced, the neurotic and half-educated girl who is married too early, the conventional clergyman, the demagogue, the dreamy idealist, are they not peculiarly with us to-day? And herein Mr. Galsworthy has followed in Ibsen's footsteps. He is an interpreter of Anglo-Saxon modernity, denouncing our evil ways, especially our reprehensible class distinctions and the selfish warfare between labour

and capital. And, like Ibsen, Mr. Galsworthy is impartial, detached, analytical; like Ibsen he has been accused of pessimism because he sees the sorrow of life as well as its joy; but he is even more cold and judicial than Ibsen, his humour is as meagre, and he is without Ibsen's fervour and poetic genius. We cannot but suspect that subconsciously the knowledge of a want of poetry has coloured Mr. Galsworthy's views upon the future of English drama ("Some Platitudes Concerning Drama," *Fortnightly Review*, December, 1909). It will probably, he prophesies, flow down two main channels "situate far apart." The one channel will be that of naturalism "faithful to the seething and multiple life around us, drama such as some are inclined to term photographic," the other a poetic drama "incarnating through its fantasy and symbolism all the deeper aspirations, yearnings, doubts and mysterious strivings of the human spirit." These are the two forms drama will take upon itself in the immediate future, forms rising from "an awakened humanity in the conscience of our time." But, says Mr. Galsworthy, "between these two forms there must be no crude unions; they are too far apart, the cross would be too violent." Here Mr. Galsworthy is speaking for himself and not for the possible drama. Ibsen has united naturalism and poetry in *Rosmersholm* and *The Lady from the Sea;* often when least we expect it the gleam of poetry lightens his prose world. And the playwrights of the Irish Theatre have brought naturalism and poetry together—Synge and other writers of the school. For Mr. Galsworthy in person naturalistic and poetic prose-drama are "situate far apart"; he is not only incapable of welding them, he can only write realistic drama. The poetry of *The Little Dream* (1911) fails, and that play of fancy, *The Pigeon* (1912) is ineffective dramatically and tedious as a morality. Poetry is not impartial and judicial; Mr. Galsworthy is by nature cold, impartial, judicial. He can present on the stage the clash of character with character, the war of the classes, the struggle of the poor and the rich, and he never depresses the beam of justice with his own finger. As a dramatist he is noteworthy, but he is never the great artist, for he is never lost to himself, and the highest art is ever unconscious arising out of the depths

of man's being from a region unexplored by the artist himself.

The importance of Mr. Galsworthy's work in modern drama does not lie in its artistic power, but in its moral implication and the ethical force of the author. That "'The Moral' is the keynote of all drama" is the chief article of his faith, and by this he means neither a moral which is a propitiatory dramatisation of a code approved by nine-tenths of the audience, nor the code by which the author himself lives, but a moral without any immediate practical purpose, left to the deduction of the individual from a faithful and undistorted presentation of things as they are for their own sake—in a word, the ethical method of Shakespeare. This is Mr. Galsworthy's theory of the drama, and sometimes he comes but little short of his theory. In *The Silver Box* (1906), *Strife* (1909) and *Justice* (1910), conscious as we are that Mr. Galsworthy is a thinker with definite views of his own, these views are only apparent as they are shadowed forth by a presentation of life that is cold and impartial. Justice is kinder to the rich man than to his poorer brother, labour suffers more than wealth in the warfare of the modern industrial world, the kindly philanthropist is at once a laughing-stock and an example to the world, these and other morals may be read in Mr. Galsworthy's plays, but he makes no attempt to indoctrinate his audience by methods which all are quick to resent unless the doctrine be also their own. There is no bias in the moral Mr. Galsworthy sets rolling, for he is faithful to the ethical character of the drama of modern life outspread before him. John Anthony, chairman of the tin-plate works, and David Roberts, chief of the strikers, are both deserted and "done down," and nothing is won for either side. The morality of Mr. Galsworthy's drama is concerned not with immediate returns but with the ultimate: it requires, therefore, "a far view, together with patient industry, for no immediately practical result."

With Mr. Bernard Shaw Mr. Galsworthy is, then, the writer of plays with a moral, the author of tendency dramas. But unlike Mr. Shaw he makes no bid for popularity. Mr. Shaw must bask himself in the sunshine of applause or the atmosphere of execration; Mr.

Galsworthy can pursue his own path. For the good of his public Mr. Shaw has been more thoughtful; for the good of his soul Mr. Galsworthy has chosen the more excellent way. The satirist, unless he raised a laugh, has never yet cleared away from the heart of society the accretions of evil custom and easy acquiescence. *John Bull's Other Island* helps us to see a folly, and it also makes us laugh. Mr. Galsworthy hardly makes us laugh, not only because he is wanting in humour, but because he is always a little strident and harsh. Unless he is writing with acerbity he becomes profitless and weak. The first inclination of Mr. Galsworthy's talent is toward satire. He adopted fiction by which to express himself because it was the mode of the day; in the eighteenth century he would have written satirical poems in iambic couplets. When he passed from fiction to drama he felt more painfully the want of poetry in his method. Cold, involved and psychological satire can have no place on the stage, for no actor can represent it, no audience fix its attention upon its abstractions. Mr. Galsworthy was driven therefore to converting satirical fiction into the impartial analysis of the drama with a purpose.

The purely human problems of life, love, hate, the passionate impulses, mother-love, madness and world-weariness with the inscrutable ways of the gods, these great themes which have occupied dramatists of all ages do not disturb the mind of Mr. Galsworthy. His vision is narrowed to social problems. *Justice* asks the question of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*—Is society justified in punishing individuals in accordance with a judicial system? And the impartiality of Mr. Galsworthy is clearly shown in this play. The clerk who tampers with a cheque is a miserably weak and neurotic creature before he goes into prison, and he is the same useless member of society when he comes out. The only justice society can offer him is kindly and repressive care in a labour colony. But this idea is not the motive of the play, nor is it thrust upon us. The same inconclusiveness attaches to *The Eldest Son* (1912), a play with much the same theme as Stanley Houghton's *Hindle Wakes*. A young man of good family has seduced one of the maid-servants. He offers her marriage. In the end her father refuses for her, declining

to accept a "charity marriage." This has the merit of greater probability than Fanny's unlikely refusal of Alan Jeffcote in *Hindle Wakes:* but intrinsically the play achieves no end beyond emphasising the impassable barrier of class distinction with an incisiveness that will please the most reactionary of conservatives. These plays, *The Silver Box*, *Strife* and the inferior *Mob* (1914) have for dramatic theme economic problems, because abstract difficulties are continually in Mr. Galsworthy's mind. In *Joy* (1907) and *The Fugitive* (1913) he has chosen more human themes. The latter is Mr. Galsworthy's version of *A Doll's House*, and a version more credible and realistic than the original. If Nora could be supposed even dimly to realise her position she would have been unable to state it with the force and acumen with which Ibsen preposterously endows her. With Clare Dedmond the position is different. She is a clergyman's daughter married to an ordinary, well-behaved Englishman of means. After a year of marriage she discovers that love for her husband, if it ever existed, is dead, and, struggle though she may, she cannot conquer her feelings of repulsion. She breaks loose, but soon collapses in the effort to support herself in a livelihood and battle against the world's contempt for a woman who has deserted her husband. She resolves to accept the inevitable left to a woman in her position, but relents and saves herself from fate by poison. It is a grim and depressing, though powerful and credible play. Clare Dedmond, if she can give little reason as the world judges, is right in demanding her freedom. And she acts consistently throughout as a woman fine in temper but not fine enough. The defect of the play is the difficulty of avoiding quite absurd melodrama in acting the character of Malise, Clare's friend, abettor and lover. It may be said, however, that in *The Fugitive* Mr. Galsworthy recovered some of the ground he had lost since he wrote *Justice* three years earlier.

Strong and unwavering sincerity in a writer, absorbing his whole nature and dominating every thought, will produce work of impressive quality although he be devoid of the higher gifts of expression. Mr. Galsworthy's significance lies in his sincerity. He is painfully aware of

the many evils done under the sun; and he comes as a reformer and philanthropist. But he is wanting in a stronger faith; the burning hope which has animated greater reformers is not his; his world is uniformly grey. None of his plays is hopeful; and the dramatic last act of *Justice*, ending in utter desolation and misery, is characteristic of his thought and attitude. But uninspiring, and in one sense uninspired as is Mr. Galsworthy's drama, it is strong, realistic, and, above all, it has no taint of the theatre. No faintest suspicion of stagey effect clings to a single one of his plays. They are, to use his own epithet, "photographic" drama.

His dialogue is the speech of men who are living beings facing the exigencies of the moment in an ordinary world. There is no artifice in the conversation of his characters. Nevertheless his dialogue is not merely a mechanical record of things said in the real world. Probably the most dramatic circumstances of real life would be intolerably unconvincing if transferred directly to the stage. Mr. Galsworthy's dialogue is the plainest and most unadorned matter-of-fact, but he understands the two arts of omission and arrangement, and, in consequence, his plays have a directness and economy in method unequalled by any living English writer.

And, further, there can be no mistaking his characters. They not only live, they are so clearly defined in dialogue and action that hardly any room is left to the actor for personal interpretation. His writing claims no ornaments and graces; but in simplicity and directness few modern plays lose less in the reading and gain less in the acting, even in these days when the producer, not the author, is the presiding genius of drama.

Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Granville Barker and St. John Hankin are typical examples of the influence of Ibsen working itself out toward a drama of modern life which shall avowedly treat of those social and economic questions vexing the modern world. They are on the stage what Mr. H. G. Wells is in fiction; and the culmination of the tendency is to be found in Mr. Galsworthy's plays, which reject every device accepted as axiomatic by the older dramatists, of whom Sir Arthur Pinero may be regarded as representative. Mr. Galsworthy transfers his

people from the office, the home, the street to the stage, modifying nothing save to compress and arrange, in order clearly to direct the attention of his audience to that question of the day which is the business of his play. Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. Galsworthy are little concerned with individual men and women for their own sake; they are commentators upon practical problems, and their characters are to them only of interest as they elucidate these problems. Their drama is not, therefore, a drama which makes its appeal as a work of art which custom cannot stale. But there are signs already that the economic-problem play has seen its day. Younger playwrights, even those who, for want of a better term, are to be named "realists," are abandoning the pose of the demagogue and social reformer to embrace again in drama the unchangeable problems of the individual life—work and ease, hunger and fullness, the relationship of man and woman in the simplest terms, of the old and the young, friendship, love and hate. In these writers the influence of Ibsen is not absent, but the impress of other ideals appears, including that of the Irish school of dramatists; and the effort has been made to carry drama away from the centre and provincialise it. Miss Horniman, with the advantages of her Manchester Repertory Company, has gathered a band of younger writers for the stage who have turned to the use of dialect. Stanley Houghton is the most noteworthy of the younger dramatists of the north who has used dialect; and with him Mr. Gilbert Cannan and Miss Githa Sowerby may be named. Mr. Masefield has also made liberal use of dialect in his plays; but his characters belong to Gloucestershire.

Stanley Houghton, 1881–1913.

Stanley Houghton turned from cotton-broking to dramatic criticism, then to the writing of plays, and in the first place of comedy. Despite his true and unforced humour, he was only moderately successful in comedy. *The Dear Departed* (1908), which dramatises the coming to life of an old man after his relations have begun to divide his property, though amusing, is entirely unimportant. *Independent Means* (1909) is barely a comedy, for the author has evidently not decided in what mood to write the play. And *The*

Younger Generation (1910), though a simpler affair, suffer from the same hesitation. The plot-idea has no originality. The world is agreed that parents make a vast mistake in insisting that their children, when they reach the end of their teens, should come home early at night, should go to church or chapel, should hold no opinions of their own or certainly not express them. The moral is a little outworn for full-grown comedy, and Houghton failed to make anything of it. The play stands first on one leg, then another, the author undecided whether he is writing serious drama, farce or comedy. *Trust the People* (1913), in which he attempted a comprehensive picture of political life, opens with a scene conceived and carried out with dramatic force and then breaks down into what is sometimes little short of farce, the more ludicrous because unintentional.

Only in *Hindle Wakes* (1912), where Stanley Houghton was intensely serious, did he achieve almost unqualified success. Alan Jeffcote, the son of a wealthy mill-owner, compromises Fanny Hawthorn, a weaver at his father's mill. The elder Jeffcote, a man of dense and obstinate principle, insists on his son renouncing his engagement with a well-to-do girl and marrying Fanny. Alan yields only to find that Fanny refuses to accept him. He is puzzled and suspects that she is sacrificing herself in her anxiety not to spoil his life. She protests this thought had not occurred to her.

"ALAN. Then, that isn't why you refused me?

FANNY. Sorry to disappoint you, but it's not.

ALAN. I didn't see what else it could be.

FANNY. Don't you kid yourself, my lad! It isn't because I'm afraid of spoiling *your* life that I'm refusing you, but because I'm afraid of spoiling *mine!* That didn't occur to you?"

He is puzzled and asks again,

"But you didn't ever really love me?

FANNY. Love you? Good heavens, of course not! Why on earth should I love you? You were just someone to have a bit of fun with. You were an amusement—a lark."

This last scene surely strikes a note of the improbable? It is inconceivable that a mill-girl, situated like Fanny Hawthorn, should act with her independence and speak like an emancipated woman who had studied the whole meaning of social relationships. The note is as false as the characterisation of Nora in *A Doll's House*. Neither Nora or Fanny could, save by a special intervention of providence, emerge so suddenly from the chrysalis stage. Houghton's first two acts were written as they were conceived, the last breaks down because the author was thinking not of his characters but of a theory of sexual relationship he was anxious to develop.

The improbability of the last scene apart *Hindle Wakes* is one of the most notable plays placed on the stage in the last few years. And the reason of its success is, for the greater part of its development, its perfect reality. Stanley Houghton could dramatise effectively the Lancashire life which he noted shrewdly and clearly; his humour was entirely natural, and moreover it was the humour of a man who had pondered life, who saw its margin of laughter in the moment he painted its tragedy and sorrow with uncompromising definition, obscuring nothing. Furthermore the realism of his method was never the realism of the dispassionate observer, whom we recognise in St. John Hankin or Mr. Granville Barker; there was in his nature a simplicity, an unpretending modesty and earnestness, which gave fire and strength to his best writing.

In the writing of drama Mr. Gilbert Cannan has not yet won for himself so marked and influential a position.

Gilbert Cannan, b. 1884.

Mary's Wedding (1912), a dialect play in one act, fails upon the stage because the element of poetry introduced into the dialogue is obviously unnatural to the characters and the situation. In other words, the play is radically false. In the writing of it Mr. Cannan was doubtless influenced by memories of Synge, and the same influence is again manifest in *Miles Dixon* (1910), in which he tries to restore to the stage the poetry of rough and common speech and an unspoiled vision of life.

More powerful and more dramatic is Miss Githa Sowerby's remarkable play, *Rutherford and Son* (1912),

in which the scene is laid among the hard-headed manufacturing people of the Tyneside. The whole action takes place in the living-room of John Rutherford, the stern and bullying father who worships his factory and subdues his children to his slightest word. The two high merits of the play are the creation of an atmosphere of harsh, grey life and the tenseness imparted to the relationship of the characters.

Githa Sowerby.

A band of northern playwrights has been springing up in the past few years, and among them others might well be named, but none has rivalled Stanley Houghton or Miss Sowerby in her single striking play, nor is it possible at this stage, when so little has been done, to judge the Lancashire writers in perspective as workers with common or differing aims.

Mr. Masefield has also made experiments with the dialect play, and he has succeeded in writing at least one forcible tragedy, although he can scarcely yet, either as poet, novelist or dramatist, be considered to have found his true place. *The Campden Wonder* was produced at the Court Theatre in 1907 by Mr. Granville Barker. The play is written in West-country dialect and describes how a man to spite his brother swears that he, his brother and his mother have murdered a man for his gold. They are hung and the man supposed to be murdered returns. Excessive improbability is not the worst fault of a piece which suffers from the number of its loose threads. *The Tragedy of Nan,* produced in 1908, is a better constructed but an equally dark and terrible tragedy. A woman, contemptuous of the mean selfishness of her lover, stabs him and flings herself into the river. Mr. Masefield is the unshrinking realist. The harshness of life, its relentless savageries are drawn without stint, for he is only too prone, here as in his poems, to confuse violence with strength. But *Nan* is a tragedy from which poetry cannot be dissociated. The ineradicable poetry of life is never absent from its rough and turbulent scenes. And it is this enfolding atmosphere of poetry which lends whatever quality it has to *The Tragedy of Pompey the Great* (1910). Mr. Masefield's imagination has been fired

John Masefield,

by the downfall of empire symbolised in the death of Pompey at Pelusium, and he succeeds in rendering in a certain degree what Shakespeare conveys so powerfully in the Roman plays—the consciousness of a world-empire behind the movement of the actors in the foreground. But Pompey suffers from the absence of any motive save the fall of a man once in great power: it is a chronicle play rather than a drama.

CHAPTER III

THE UNCERTAIN NOTE

Sir James Barrie—Alfred Sutro—Arnold Bennett—Somerset Maugham—Hubert Henry Davies—Rudolf Besier—B. M. Hastings.

Of drama it is probably more true than of any art that each age gets what it deserves. In any age and in any country the majority of plays must be produced in the hope that they will prove a financial success, for, from author to scene-shifter, many are concerned. The poet may enjoy an independent income and publish his verse at his own expense careless of royalties. Practically the dramatist can never enjoy this happy position, for the whole army of the theatre is dependent upon his power of drawing money to the booking-office. A few, Mr. Shaw and Mr. Galsworthy in particular at this moment in England, may write to satisfy their own intellectual needs and yet be rewarded in this world. But the number who can hope to tread this narrow way is small. The writer who looks to his returns must, in general, be satisfied if he can please without entirely sinking his own individuality. And because his work marks no high aims, because it is not indicative of personal force, it does not follow that, even in a literary sense, it is entirely negligible. Sir James Barrie is popular, and deservedly, for his style, grace and charm of manner; but he is significant of nothing in modern drama, for on the stage he is most delightful when he allows his fancy to roam uncontrolled by reality. *The Little Minister* (1897) it is true, apart from a too abundant sentiment, was a picture of real life, for it had the advantage of being founded upon one of the best of his prose-tales. But in a play like *The Admirable Crichton* (1903) he carries us over into the regions of pure burlesque.

Sir James Barrie, b. 1860.

Lord Loam holds that class distinctions should be effaced, and he is ready to sit at meals with his servants. Crichton, his butler, believes that class distinctions should be observed. The theme is dramatised by the shipwreck of Lord Loam's yacht. Lord Loam, his daughter, her cousin, the tweeny maid and Crichton find themselves on a desert island. Here the butler comes to the front, discovers means for supporting the life of all, and the others are virtually his menials. But after their rescue and the return to London the old order reasserts itself, and Crichton falls back into his original position. Equally popular have been his other plays of burlesque fancy or sentimental humour, *Little Mary* (1903), *What Every Woman Knows* (1908) and *Quality Street* (1903). The last-named play is typical of his favourite manner. The action, which is placed in the days of Napoleon and Waterloo, gives Sir James Barrie an opportunity for graceful sentimentality and superficial pathos in narrating the love-story of the daring soldier and the tired schoolmistress. It is charming, it is pleasant, it is quaintly ingenious, but it shirks everything that is essential to painting of human life and character whether realistically or in the spirit of optimistic idealism. Sir James Barrie's natal gift is poetic fancy rather than imagination, and this gift has found its perfect expression in the beautiful child's fantasy, *Peter Pan* (1904).

The sentimental, the pretty, the humorous in undreamt-of situations Sir James Barrie can touch with an ease and a grace which is given to no other writer of the day. But when he attempts tragedy or the intense situation he fails. *Half an Hour* (1913), the transcript of half an hour in which a woman flies from her husband to her lover and returns to her husband before her flight has been discovered, is ludicrous and commonplace melodrama. The husband is a farcical figure; and the little play is a piece of pure artifice, as indeed is nearly all his dramatic writing, save that most of his plays, unlike *Half an Hour*, are redeemed by quaint fancy, kindly humour and tender sentiment.

Sir James Barrie has not the force of a strong personality, but popularity has left him the individuality of his work. Of Mr. Sutro it is difficult to say as much: he is now

content to amuse his audiences with the stereotyped tricks of the comic stage. *The Walls of Jericho* (1904), his first success, was understood to be satire upon idle and worthless society and therefore found favour with all classes. But it may be questioned whether the moral implication was not accidental and unsuspected by the author. In his later plays he makes no pose as the satirist of society, *Mollontrave on Women* (1905), *The Perplexed Husband* (1911), *The Two Virtues* (1914) and other plays which fall into the same period are exaggerated and artificial farce.

Alfred Sutro, b. 1863.

Mr. Arnold Bennett is an example of a dramatist with a commercial sense finely developed. In *The Great Adventure* (1911) and *Milestones* (1912), the latter written in collaboration with Edward Knoblauch, he has succeeded in producing two plays which have won upon the public fancy and enjoyed remarkably long runs. In the case of *The Great Adventure* this popularity can have nothing to do with the reality of the piece, for Mr. Bennett names it a "play of the fancy," and he might equally so have described *Milestones* in which three generations are represented in three acts. The humour of the situation turns upon a picture of the daringly original idea of one generation becoming the commonplace of the next; but perhaps the greatest recommendation of the piece was the opportunity it afforded for quaint contrasts in costume and furniture. It was distinctively a play for the producer. His gift of light-hearted and fanciful exaggeration Mr. Bennett put to its best use three years earlier in *What the Public Wants* (1909), a spirited satire on the up-to-date newspaper proprietor.

Arnold Bennett, b. 1867.

In wit, art and character-drawing Mr. Somerset Maugham is a better playwright than Mr. Bennett, though the personal note is often but faintly heard in his writing, for his manner has changed with his contact with changing influences. His first play was written in German and performed in Berlin in 1902. His second play, *A Man of Honour*, appeared in

William Somerset Maugham, b. 1874.

the following year, and since that date he has produced novels and plays in continuous and rapid succession. He eclipsed Wilde's record by having on one occasion four plays running simultaneously in London.

In common with nearly all young dramatists he began by the writing of tragedy. *A Man of Honour* in idea and handling is not original, but it is good writing. The sordidness of unhappy marriage, the pathetic agony of the little barmaid who loves passionately and knows that she cannot hold her husband's love, are drawn strongly and clearly. But he has not chosen since to write anything in the same manner. *Lady Frederick* (1907), which succeeded it at a distance of some years, professes to be comedy and betrays a study of Oscar Wilde's methods. Mr. Maugham's people do not scintillate as brilliantly as Wilde's, but they are witty as indiscriminately and with as little relevance to character. The play was one of Mr. Maugham's great successes because it was a mixture of excellent melodrama and farce. *Penelope* (1909) is better comedy, the characters more realistic, and there is less straining for the aphorism, but it presents no features of outstanding merit, nor was it as successful as *Lady Frederick*.

In farce Mr. Maugham is eminently successful. *Jack Straw* (1908) and *Mrs. Dot* (1908) are bright, rapid and amusing, and they are removed from commonplace farce which excites laughter by mere buffoonery. In his later plays—*Smith* (1909), *Loaves and Fishes* (1911) and *The Land of Promise* (1914) Mr. Maugham takes himself more seriously, inveighing against the manners and vices of the social world; and the change is probably due to the influence of didactic dramatists like Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Shaw. But Mr. Maugham is well able to hold his own and write with something of his own manner, for *The Land of Promise*, which contrasts the manners of the old country with the way of life in a Canadian shack, is a fine and truthful human comedy.

Mr. Maugham is an extraordinarily rapid, but he is also a good and accurate worker. He has taught himself the requirements of the stage, and if in *Lady Frederick* he represents the somewhat naïve methods handed on by Wilde he can write more realistically in *Penelope*, and in his later plays he yields to the obsession of the

period in trying to say something to his generation. He is never strikingly original; he works with other dramatists before him and with one eye upon his public; his aphorisms upon life are not many, successive plays take up and repeat the best of them. But he has both humour and wit; and for these much may be forgiven, even the rather distant and unconvincing characterisation he offers us. He does not appear to have acquired a strong sympathy with human beings; he uses his characters as pivots for dialogue and action, content if they are sufficiently true to escape being wire-pulled puppets or exaggerated examples of realism.

Hubert Henry Davies, 1876–1917.

Among others of his day is to be named Hubert Henry Davies, who succeeded in combining good writing, some intellectual depth and a tender emotionalism without at any time rising to a very distinctive level of workmanship. His plays are in large part plainly adapted for the theatre and the audience; nevertheless they rarely fail of passages which give indication of fine and gentle feeling. The character who takes the title-part in *Cousin Kate* (1903) is a generous and warm-hearted woman drawn in strong and simple outline which does credit to Davies's knowledge of human nature. The story of the stolen jewels in *Mrs. Gorringe's Necklace* (1903) is more definitely shaped by the thought of an audience, but it is not without an element of genuine truthfulness. *The Mollusc* (1907), if again a little melodramatic, manifests the writer who has sympathy with everyday life, and who can, when he does not think of the stage, draw it truthfully. *Cousin Kate*, despite its want of stagecraft, particularly in the intolerably long dialogue of the second act, appeared to give promise of better things. Davies, however, did not redeem the expectations he raised with this play. He could be tender without becoming weak, he could bring light, sweetness and poetry into his plays; but his outlook was not wide nor is his hold upon reality strong; and finally the commercial needs of the stage appear to have been too much for him.

Of the work of Mr. Rudolf Besier and Mr. B. M. Hastings, who have as yet produced so little, it is scarcely possible

to speak. In *Don* (1909) Mr. Besier wrote a thoroughly good play in which the clash of temper with temper was powerfully drawn. It was strong, ably constructed and the characters were human. *Lady Patricia* (1911) was a gay and farcical comedy, vivacious, amusing in its situations and little more.

Rudolf Besier, b. 1878.

Mr. Hastings belongs to the realists, but not to the bald and painstaking realists, for he has abundance of humour, sprightliness and dashes of wit. And, further, his dialogue is remarkably deft and clean-cut, and his ideas possess originality. *The New Sin* (1912) at first suggests a title chosen with the aim of attracting the idle who seek a new sensation: but the play in itself is far from being sensational, and the title has wit and point, for the new sin is the choice of life rather than suicide. So long as Mr. Hilary Cutts lives his brothers and sisters can receive no part of the inheritance left by their father. Upon the death of Hilary they are each to receive ten thousand pounds. He attempts to make way for them by taking upon himself the guilt of a cowardly murder committed by a worthless brother. Unfortunately for this scheme he is reprieved by the Home Secretary; and the curtain falls upon an outburst of chagrin from the murderer who has allowed his brother to go to death in the prospect of receiving a fortune. The plot is preposterous; but the working-out of the theme and the character-drawing are striking. Furthermore, although we are not burdened with didactic excursions, we are conscious that the play comes from a writer who has observed life and has something worth the saying. And in another sphere the light comedy, *Love—And what Then?* (1912), produced within a few months of *The New Sin*, is equally a striking piece of work. The Evangelical clergyman, the butterfly wife who realises that she is a pretty woman after she becomes a mother, and the human, worldly-wise bishop are delightfully and clearly drawn characters. The play has its weak and ridiculous scenes; but these lapses are not distinctive of Mr. Hastings. At his best he is not only humorous, but thoughtful and truthful.

Basil Macdonald Hastings, b. 1881.

PART IV

THE NOVEL

CHAPTER I

LATE DEVELOPMENTS

In the last half-century, or a little more, the novel is plainly distinguished from the fiction of the preceding one hundred and fifty years by two changes—a notable gain in technique and an increasing solemnity with which the novelist takes himself and his work. The third-rate scribbler of to-day would blush to be found guilty of those weaknesses in the conduct of narrative into which Scott, Hugo and Thackeray lapsed with magnificent unconsciousness of committing offence. In the mere matter of form and construction the chief influence for good (and sometimes for evil) came from France. Balzac, despite his insufferably disorderly habits of composition, wrote at a white-heat which fused his material; and his method of creating half his matter by corrections in proof had its formal advantages, and disadvantages only in the printer's bill. To describe Balzac either as a stylist or a master of form would be impossible; but there is in him a concentration which distinguishes his writing from that of his great contemporaries, George Sand and the elder Dumas. They wrote to the bidding of passing impulses, poetically, romantically; Balzac, possessed by the French passion for analysis and arrangement, sketched out the vast outlines, never completely to be filled in, of *La comédie humaine*. Incohate as is the whole, it is still a vision of order. The first of the masters of form for form's sake, Prosper Mérimée, came a little later. He and Gautier discovered and made the short story as it is still understood and written. Of all forms in prose-writing the short story calls for the highest endowment of artistic faculty in the author, and it is, therefore, despite the immense opportunities afforded by the plethora of modern magazines, seldom compassed with success.

Gautier chose unto himself the motto *l'art pour l'art*, a counsel of the impossible which will always meet with its periods of resuscitation from the limbo of human failures. Its practice in the strictness of the letter invariably prostrates the artist in emotional and intellectual exhaustion. Flaubert, who succeeded Gautier and Mérimée, was, with his disciple Guy de Maupassant, saved from nemesis by the original vice of romanticism, from which neither was wholly delivered, despite high-minded devotion to the practice of realism, artistic form and the discovery of the *mot propre*. Nevertheless in the second half of the last century no novelist, as an influence and a moulding force, can be counted as of equal importance with Flaubert. *Madame Bovary* (1859) is a boundary mark in the story of European fiction. Beyond and above all differences his influence is traceable in the brothers de Goncourt, Daudet, Maupassant, and to carry the survey into our foreground, in M. Pierre Loti and M. Anatole France. The lesson of the French novel, principally as exemplified in the work of Balzac, Flaubert, Maupassant and Zola, crossed the channel and reappeared in the fiction of Oscar Wilde, Mr. George Moore, Hubert Crackanthorpe, Ernest Dowson, Henry Harland, and, after his own bent and manner, in Mr. Thomas Hardy. Even before their advent the tide had turned. Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot wrote novels much as they had been written in the eighteenth century, in an over-long, disorderly and ill-judged manner. Charlotte Brontë, however, evolved in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* the novel of narrow range, which projected its interest upon two or three figures, the other characters serving as a curtain against which the protagonists stood in clear relief. The credit of directing Charlotte Brontë's aims in fiction can hardly be given to the French realists: her venture was an independent leading of her own genius; but unintentionally she was a forerunner of change. New ideals in the art of construction, concentration, compression, style, chiefly borrowed from France and sometimes worked in a manner peculiarly English, mark a break which separates the fiction of the earlier and the latter half of the century.

The older novelist was not merely content to find his

story and write it from day to day, careless of formal artistry, he wrote chiefly to please, and, this attained, he cared little whether other things were added to him or no. Defoe was a master of the picaresque romance, and, despite his pretence of moral intention, the end of his tale was to capture the taste of his readers for the sensational and scandalous. Fielding cannot be said to have any positive aim in view save entertainment; the greater qualities of his work are unconscious, for few great men have been less self-conscious than he. Smollett alternated between the sensational romance and the novel of manners without any ulterior purpose. Sterne, happily for his own and later generations, purposed only to be inconsequent. And neither Scott nor Jane Austen wrote unto intellectual and moral edification. Scott was in his own eyes only secondarily a man of letters, and he held no high opinion of the novel as a form of literature. Jane Austen was a retiring maiden-lady with a sense of humour, who never dreamed of the prophetic call of practitioners in fiction. Richardson alone in the eighteenth century took himself with monstrous seriousness, and wrote the novel first to instruct and afterwards to entertain. His example was but slowly followed, though, toward the end of the century, the influence of Rousseau and the French Revolution set going many doctrinaire novelists of a minor order—among them Robert Bage, Thomas Holcroft and William Godwin. And about the same time novels with a purpose were written by Hannah More, Mrs. Inchbald and Miss Edgeworth. But even with the self-important Richardson, and more with the others, the narrative was regarded in no other light than the spoonful of jam which helped the patient to gulp down his powder.

Scott, the least didactic of novelists, changed all this. With him the novel became a power, and from the position of poor serving-maid to literature stepped into the forefront and before long became mistress in the house. Hugo, Dumas, and a hundred others in every European country practised the writing of historical romance; and fiction was no longer negligible in comparison with the sister arts of poetry and drama. The didactic intention grew to adult importance. Balzac offered a complete sketch of human

activities. The moralists and immoralists, including George Sand, Feuillet, Flaubert, Zola, embodied in fiction didactic purposes, and the "heresy of instruction" was noised abroad. It is unnecessary to follow the story further in France—few, even of those who accepted the motto of Gautier, escaped the obsession, and the novelist became a teacher, a social prophet, a critic of manners. M. Anatole France, M. Bourget, M. André Gide, to name but three, would disclaim the mere standing of society entertainers. In Russia the story is the same. Tolstoy and Dostoievsky go out into the by-ways and hedges compelling the folk to come in. And in England the current set early to this direction. Dickens is the avowed novelist with a purpose, aiming his shafts at the poor law, the debtor's gaol, private schools, chancery administration, hypocrisy in religion and other failures in our social institutions. At the same time Thackeray satirised individuals and social types. George Eliot as eagerly uses the novel to inculcate the tenets of the Ethical Church as Charlotte Yonge to buttress a new spirit in the Church of England. And, like Richardson or Zola, she took herself with immense seriousness. Meredith and Mr. Thomas Hardy use the novel to set forth their reading of the world's meaning, and make no concessions to the weak, the conventional and the unintellectual brother. The tendency to treat narrative as nothing save the vehicle of philosophy and instruction grew, till the moral came first and the story was written to force it home. This is the state of Mrs. Humphry Ward, Miss Marie Corelli, Mr. John Galsworthy and Mr. H. G. Wells. Mr. Wells has promised us the early death of novels written only as works of art, reflecting life for its own sake, detached from prejudices and ethical principles of the author. The novel of the future is to assume the functions of the pulpit and the platform, to exhort, to guide and to restrain. And he has illustrated his theory in didactic tractates like *The New Machiavelli* and *Marriage*. Thus the romance of Defoe and the art of Flaubert have been sacrificed at the altar of the demagogue and preacher.

But the end is not yet. No work has survived the ordeal of the centuries which did not add to its contemporary appeal the claim of creative imagination and

artistic form. Plato's philosophy, for most men, weighs as nothing in the balance compared with the consummate beauty of his style and the art of his dialogue. Criticism and instruction, like grammar, follow the thing made. Language takes upon it new forms and grammars quickly become obsolete. Novels whose primary business is a criticism or an exhortation based on contemporary life and events, have, unless inadvertently they are also works of art, no more importance to literature than the leaflet distributed at revival meetings or the printed matter sent out by advertising firms and dignified by the name of "literature." In proportion to the author's power of imitating, scandalising or entertaining they will enjoy a few years of life before they lose all significance under the conditions of a new age, when men have other problems to consider. Art has no direct concern with passing problems in politics, morals and social economics; its foundations are fixed upon the unchanging in human nature—emotional reaction to experience. And this emotional reaction is always the same. The triumph of the financier on the Stock Exchange is essentially the savage pleasure of his aboriginal forefather when he slew his prey with a flint-headed spear; the joy of the aeronaut in swift flight differs in nothing from the ecstasy of the Indian shooting broken rapids in a frail canoe. The insight of the creative artist carries him beyond the curtain of the visible to the eternal that is in human nature under all varieties of experience, for his end is not photographic realism but the *imago veritatis*. And this faculty belongs only to the genius who appears but seldom. Hundreds of novelists can render life accurately as it appears to most men; but the stronger emotion which binds the meaning of the individual to the meaning of the whole lies outside their cognisance. Fiction of the lower order is a pen-and-ink sketch, a journalistic report of the things that happen—nothing is created from the limbeck of the imagination. The one invariable result of the contact of genius with the common experience of life is the introduction into the world of a new idea, a new vision. Nobody can again regard humanity in the same light who has once met with Falstaff—it is an enlargement of the mental and emotional horizon. The

realistic and non-creative artist leaves everything as it was before.

It has been predicted that the novel has seen its day and must decline. This despair has no justification: it is as probable that the great novels yet remain to be written. Though fiction has usurped much of the realm once held in fealty to poetry, drama and the essay, great poetry is still being written, and perhaps great drama. The comprehensiveness and elasticity of the novel is its recommendation; it has, therefore, been chosen as a form of self-expression by a number of the greatest of modern minds. If the fact that the writing of the novel seems to call for no special knowledge, no scholarship, no training, has led to an inrush of the mediocre and incompetent, this argues nothing against the value of a novel by a Fielding or a Tolstoy. There is as much difference between *Tom Jones* and any one of the many hundreds of the season's novels at the library, as there is between *Othello* and a bad melodrama. Nor, because it appears easy, is there any need to dismiss the novel as the lowest of all the forms of art. Every sincere expression of emotion and thought in art is legitimate. Art is always art, poetry is always poetry in whatever form. What fails to be art may be good craftsmanship; and most novels are this and no more.

It was natural that in early stages the novel should evolve its peculiar characteristics and potentialities rapidly. From Defoe to Sterne it travelled a longer journey than it has since been destined to traverse. At each stage in evolution toward a greater elaboration and exactness the power required to advance another step is enormously increased, just as the great liner must burn an indefinitely greater quantity of coal to add another knot to her speed after a certain point has been reached. With growing complexity in life and the expression of life in art changes must show themselves more slowly. And, therefore, to many the art of the novel may seem to be suspended or exhausted. Like a ship becalmed on a sea we wait. But the wind never fails at the last to ripple the water.

Mediocre fiction more easily than any other form of the literary art wins its brief day of popularity before

it is consigned to oblivion. Each season brings its epoch-making books, which yield to others in the season that follows. Only a few novels in any century can have a meaning a hundred years after they are written. Five or six English novelists of the eighteenth century, at the most, should be known to any ordinarily well-read man, and perhaps seven or eight who belong to the nineteenth. The rest are going or gone. Where are the novels of Bulwer Lytton, Disraeli, Wilkie Collins, William Black? The snows of yester-year are more fresh to the memory of all but the few, the few for whom the knowledge of literature is a profession. These are gone, or nearly, for they created nothing out of the unknown.

Writers of prose-fiction mentioned in the chapters which follow form a large rally, and the names omitted are legion. Of those who find a place here the greater number will be forgotten in a few decades. But for all men the game must be for the hour that is given: if we work for posterity it can only be by remembering the present.

CHAPTER II

NEW-COMERS

§ 1. Oscar Wilde—George Moore—George Gissing—Rudyard Kipling—Samuel Butler.

§ 2. Watts-Dunton—'Mark Rutherford.'

§ 3. Hubert Crackanthorpe—Henry Harland—Ernest Dowson—H. D. Lowry—Arthur Symons—John Davidson—Max Beerbohm—Laurence Housman—Bernard Shaw.

§ 4. Cunninghame Graham—W. H. Hudson—Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch—Sir Henry Rider Haggard—Baring-Gould—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—Sir Gilbert Parker—Henry Seton Merriman—Grant Allen—Israel Zangwill—W. E. Tirebuck.

§ 5. David Christie Murray—Hall Caine—Frankfort Moore—E. F. Benson—Morley Roberts—'F. Anstey'—Jerome K. Jerome—W. W. Jacobs.

§ 6. Stevenson, Macdonald, Black—William Sharpe—Neil Munro—Sir James Barrie—'Ian Maclaren'—S. R. Crockett—'George Douglas'—J. H. Findlater and Mary Findlater.

§ 1

In 1870, the year of Dickens' death, the first era of the Victorian novel came to an end. After this date George Eliot produced the lengthy kaleidoscope of *Middlemarch* and the interesting but second-rate study of *Daniel Deronda*. Her truly creative period as an artist closed many years before with *Silas Marner* (1861). Charlotte Brontë had been dead some years before George Eliot appeared as a novelist: had she lived her influence would in all probability have hastened developments which are first clearly marked in her novels, and later become common to most writers of prose-fiction of any importance. She always writes as if what she had to say were vital, not merely a matter of interest. The iterated note of personal conviction, first intensified in Charlotte Brontë, has been adopted by the didactic, hortatory or psychological novelist of to-day. Further, her novels are constructed upon a conflict of character between two or three personalities, and the wider canvas of the older

novelist is abandoned. Yet after her Meredith continued, despite the modern and twentieth-century habit of his thinking, to write in the older, the broader and more diffuse manner; and Mr. Thomas Hardy, although he carried the English novel a stage on its way in the art of concentration and construction, still brought within the central interest of his greater novels a large number of characters.

Meredith and Mr. Thomas Hardy have been the two most powerful influences upon English prose-fiction in the last twenty-five years: nearly every novelist has assimilated something from one or the other, or from both, introducing characteristics proper to himself so far as he was able to discover them. But thirty years ago neither Meredith nor Mr. Hardy had reached the dominating position they were destined to attain later. After the decline of the Victorian novel proper with the death of George Eliot, the chief tendencies traceable come from France, and declare themselves as an æsthetic impressionism or drab realism, or a combination of the two. The purely æsthetic novel is as little tolerable finally as a cake composed only of sugar icing; for the ground of the novel must be an experience of humanity in the rough, and with this the hot-house plant of æstheticism has little in common. The novel that may be defined as pure æstheticism, for the want of a better term, has been practised by Mr. Richard le Gallienne and others, but their attempts are of small importance or value, and the signal example of this kind of writing is to be found in Oscar Wilde. *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* (1891) is hardly to be counted a novel, for the whole matter is on the level of *The Canterville Ghost*, and only redeemed by extraordinary ingenuity and ironic wit which make it one of the most brilliant pieces of writing to which Wilde ever put his hand. In itself, however, it is but an amusing and paradoxical *jeu d'esprit* (garnished with twisted proverbial epigrams) in its picture of the man who calmly commits murder from a clear sense of duty to the future happiness of the woman he is to wed. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) is Wilde's only novel. "I wrote that," he said, "in a few days, because a friend of mine declared I could not write a

Oscar Wilde, 1856–1900.

novel." And *Dorian Gray* bears traces of rapid production in the unnecessary length and tediousness (an art Wilde did not deliberately cultivate) of much of the dialogue, and in the absence of proportion in the development of the narrative. It is possible to believe that when *Dorian Gray* was new it made a stir. The luscious suggestiveness of much of the writing was certain to please some and shock others; but it is difficult to believe that it was ever an interesting book to read through at a sitting; and Lord Henry Wotton's epigrams are below the standard Wilde was capable of reaching, save for a few which are of his best quality—outwardly vain and trivial they contain clear insight and good philosophy of everyday life. *Dorian Gray* was written against a bet, and it has all the appearance of hasty work, except in the elaborate colour and wealth of the famous eleventh chapter. Even as a diploma piece in the art of æsthetic impressionism *Dorian Gray* is not very striking. Its inspiration is purely literary and drawn from Huysmans' *A Rebours*. It is beautiful, it is untrue, it is lifeless, using that word in its strict sense. Wilde had the power of observation, the faculties of sincerity and sympathy; but he walked deliberately in the blinkers of that art which is a lie, with the result that he wrote no fiction and no drama which excites any but an intellectual interest. Even the suggestiveness of *Dorian Gray* is purely intellectual, and has no part with the manner of Sterne, Gautier and Maupassant. Wilde lived not the life of the emotions, but of intellectual imagination and the lie. Neither in fiction nor in drama has he created a single entirely credible character; and in this he would have gloried, for he held that while we may believe in the impossible the probable will never command our assent. He summed up the nature of his own achievement when he declared that he kept his talent only for his books and put his genius into his life.

Wilde used his talent audaciously, throwing out his net on all sides. He borrowed much from France, but his primary debt in youth was to Pater and the Pre-Raphaelities; he put little into his writing that he borrowed directly from an independent observation of life. He bent nearly all his genius to a pose; and, despite

his high gifts, the whole after-effect of his work has been narrowly confined. When Wilde was at the height of his fame the most important new manifestation in English fiction was an impressionistic realism due to French influences; and the greatest work in this vein is to be found in the earlier novels of Mr. George Moore, while a band of younger writers, many connected with the *Yellow Book*, followed in the same path. As in the poetry, so in the fiction of the period the common tendency was to worship the god of things as they are, and attempt to render life by a cumulative register of the exact facts. To this impulse we owe Gissing's drab pictures of middle-class life, Mr. Kipling's romantic and adventurous realism, and the satiric realism of Samuel Butler. Butler was not much known or regarded till many years later, but he was doing his real work contemporaneously with the best writing of those whom we have just named, and it is now possible to see that in independence and intellectual force he was one of the most notable prose-writers of the last century.

Of recent years Zola has fallen into a slough of discredit, and Mr. George Moore, the most important example of English discipleship to Zola, has suffered with his master. *A Mummer's Wife* and *Esther Waters* were once novels heartily admired or heartily detested by everybody, for the name of the author stood for a well-defined intention in literary methods. Other aims and other ideals have come, and Mr. Moore has fallen into a period of comparative neglect, partly because he is not led by a single idea and refuses to cling obstinately to lopsided enthusiasms. His chief weakness is a sensitive receptiveness tempered by a sane and unenthusiastic spirit of criticism. The result is marked in several changes of front in the course of his literary life. He began to write novels under the influence of a profound admiration for Zola; in course of time Zola was dispossessed and Balzac came to his own; in the middle period, with novels like *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*, Mr. Moore wrote slowly elaborated psychological study; the enthusiasm of the Irish Movement caught him, and he wrote the charming *Untilled Field* and *The Lake;* and, lastly,

George Moore, b. 1853.

disillusioned of hopes in the literary renascence of Ireland, he turned to criticise the movement with a friendly irony. The moods and the beliefs of Mr. Moore have changed many times, but each mood and faith has been shaped by a temperament personal to himself, betraying no indefiniteness. The story of his intellectual alternations is not difficult to follow; it is clearly printed on the pages of his novels, and, further, Mr. Moore has written his autobiography many times, with a pleasure in talking of himself hardly rivalled by Stevenson. In 1904 he supplied a preface to a new edition of *Confessions of a Young Man*, first published in 1888. "Here," he writes, "ye shall find me, the germs of all I have written are in the *Confessions*, *Esther Waters* and *Modern Painting*, my love of France—the country as Pater would say of my instinctive election—and all my prophecies." Here is pictured the youthful egoist, happy in freedom to shape his own plans in life from an early age, dreaming and finding his way toward art in detachment from the influences of his country, till he almost lost familiarity with his native tongue. In Paris he gained his first strong literary impressions from Hugo, De Musset, Gautier, Théodore de Banville, Baudelaire, Zola and Balzac. The influence of Zola was in the ascendent when Mr. Moore first tried his hand in fiction; but, while from time to time he has recanted faith in other gods to whom once he offered worship, Balzac has never wholly been disowned. He can write: "Of those I have loved deeply there is but one that still may thrill me with the old passion, with the first ecstasy—it is Balzac." Mr. Moore has never found himself wholly at home in his own country: native temperament led him from the first to sympathy with French literature and French views of life. When a young man he found little in contemporary English writers, though he asserts, deceiving himself, that to *Marius the Epicurean* he owed "the last temple" of his soul. He has since burned incense at other altars in other temples, and with equal fervour; but beneath the changes the mingling of clear-sighted criticism and personal prejudice has altered little in its character. The *Confessions* displays the tireless egoism of Mr. Moore, his sensitiveness to external influences, his scepticism of

any enthusiasms save his own, and finally of these, his dislike for the domestic literature of his age, his devotion to France, and his discovery, repeated many years later in *Salve*, that no great literature has been written by Roman Catholics since the time of the Reformation.

Mr. Moore took up his autobiography again with *Memoirs of My Dead Life* (1906), and followed this with the trilogy named *Hail and Farewell* (1911–1914). The *Memoirs* is the most sentimental of Mr. Moore's books, the book which best illustrates the author's complacent delight in regarding " the ruins of George Moore by moonlight "—to use Mr. G. K. Chesterton's happy phrase. As Mr. Moore tries to summon up the ghost of his dead self, his affectations grow upon him; and the callousness of intellectual sentimentality, suffered to reach a rank luxuriance, is exhibited in the unfeeling comment of the author, when he learns that he has arrived home too late to see his mother alive : " Not altogether bad news," I said to myself; " my mother is dead, but I have been saved the useless pain, the torture of spirit I should have endured if I had arrived in time." Of a finer order in every way as literature are *Ave* (1911), *Salve* (1912) and *Vale* (1914), in which the scene is transferred to Ireland, and Mr. Moore writes of the Irish literary movement and its leaders, Mr. W. B. Yeats, A. E. and others. In these volumes of reminiscence the egotistic sentimentalism disappears, the thought is strong and clear, and characters are vividly sketched in with a deft satiric touch. After betraying some difficulty in getting under weigh Mr. Moore gathers the differing strands of these books skilfully together, and writes in a style immeasurably superior to his early work. He writes as the candid friend in the house of the Irish movement, pointing out the family weaknesses and predicting inevitable failure in the future. Though he sees clearly that the movement can never realise itself, his commentary on its failure is not the charm of these books—it lies in the portraiture of men. Mr. Moore has drawn nothing with finer insight and strength than the figure of A. E., the beautiful poet, imbued with a high faith in the ancient gods, a profound mysticism, and a practical genius for taking his part in everyday

life and promoting co-operative societies. It may be questioned whether *Hail and Farewell*, which makes copy, half satirically, half sympathetically, out of friends, is dictated by the finest feeling, but, waiving this and adopting a more impersonal standpoint, these volumes are to be counted with the better class of literary autobiography, far above the ordinary volume of reminiscence which adds new terrors to the lives of contemporaries. The popular appeal is weaker than in Mr. Moore's earlier memoirs and the novels, but his fine gifts in style and literary manner have never been shown to better advantage than in the discursive medley of *Hail and Farewell;* for the form affords the author a ready opportunity of combining fiction and criticism, and in either field, as novelist or literary and artistic critic, Mr. Moore's work has been striking and individual.

He began in the conventional and accepted manner by publishing poetry—*Flowers of Passion* (1878) and *Pagan Poems* (1881)—but with a wisdom, which if shared by many would ease the bitterness of life, he soon realised that " minor poetry is not sufficient occupation for a lifetime " ; and although, notably in ' The Sweetness of the Past,' he has not failed to write true poetry, these collections of verse show that he did wisely in turning to prose. His verse reflects nothing that may not be found elsewhere, whereas his prose never lacks interest and individuality. *A Modern Lover* (1883) and *A Mummer's Wife* (1884) were written during Mr. Moore's apprenticeship to Zola, a servitude which he cast off before writing the *Confessions;* but at this stage he was fast bound. *A Mummer's Wife* opens with a scene drawn in the machine-made and undiscerning manner of Zola. A woman is watching by the bedside of her husband who lies tortured with the paroxysms of a bronchial cough. The dirty room, the fetid atmosphere, the repulsive medicine bottles, the exasperating cough are all described with hair-breadth exactness. It is well done ; and, if worth doing, Zola could not have bettered it. The story proceeds with the fortunes of the sick man's wife who falls in love with a travelling actor, elopes with him and gradually sinks into drunken wretchedness. It is a sordid and dreary tale, and Mr. Moore follows his master even to the neglect

of style; but the power of the book there is no gainsaying. The very baldness of the style is perhaps an advantage in depicting scenes so shabby, threadbare and unpleasing. Mr. Moore succeeds by the exact register of each detail in printing the background of his tale upon the imagination. In uncompromising and powerful vividness he has never surpassed the description of the child dying of convulsions in its cot, while the drunken mother rolls on her bed, and the merciless green moonlight pours into the room. The age shuddered, and Mr. Moore was classed with Zola, the most lewd of writers. But the strength of the book compelled recognition; although in many respects it is imitative copy, with Flaubert and Zola carefully remembered on each page, it has a force and directness in gaining effects which Mr. Moore has never wholly reached again. Its successor, *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), though labelled "realistic" for our information, is so in a different sense; Mr. Moore's method of studying girl life among the gentry classes of Ireland by throwing a group of girls into high relief and sinking the environing men is unnatural, and this is not one of his successful studies in character and temperament.

It was not till ten years after *A Mummer's Wife* that Mr. Moore published another book which created a stir of indignation and admiration—*Esther Waters* (1894). Before writing the earlier book he had gathered intimate knowledge of the travelling actor's life and habits: in *Esther Waters* he worked up his notes of the race-course and the betting-ring; and the story of the servant girl who meets with trouble has no essential relation to the background of the novel. Psychological study of character is slighter in *Esther Waters* than in *A Mummer's Wife*. We learn little that is convincing of the influence upon Esther, who has been trained among the Plymouth Brethren, of her introduction to the servants of a racing household. In *A Mummer's Wife* the change of mind and moral standard in the wife of the little draper, when she is suddenly transported into the atmosphere of a third-rate theatrical company, is worked out with fine precision and truthfulness. *Esther Waters* brought Mr. Moore greater fame, but *A Mummer's Wife* is the stronger book. After we depart from the servants' hall in the

earlier chapters of *Esther Waters* hardly a character has interest, save the heroine of the tale.

With *Esther Waters* Mr. Moore closed his first period as a novelist, the period in which, to use the word he adopted to himself, his method was realistic. A second stage and new influences are marked by *Evelyn Innes* (1898) and its sequel, *Sister Teresa* (1901). His manner in character-drawing is no longer that with which he began in *A Mummer's Wife*, where the line is hard and inflexible and the shadows black. If we may compare with the art of painting, the best qualities of *A Mummer's Wife* are those of Hogarth, the worst the quantities of meaningless black paint with which earlier German artists delighted to daub the canvas. In *Evelyn Innes* the characterisation is more complex and elaborate in execution; Mr. Moore is more anxious and uncertain, because he sets himself a more difficult task. Evelyn Innes, an educated woman and an operatic singer with a European fame, is a sufficiently different figure from the runaway tradesman's wife, and in her Mr. Moore has succeeded in reaching his most penetrating study of womanhood. But his success is not complete, for he writes in a mood too critical for the artist, and, little as he may be ready to admit it, he labours under the influence of Henry James and Henry James's chief weakness of shapeless inconclusiveness. And too often Mr. Moore strays into criticism of Wagner, discussions upon the art of music and the place of the sexual instinct in music—questions which might better have found a place in a volume of essays. *Sister Teresa* is hardly a sequel to *Evelyn Innes*, but a continuation of the same story in a different volume and under a different title. The singer and actress of the first volume has become a nun. The author's aim is to study the influence of the meagre pieties of conventual life upon a woman capable of art, passions and sins. Faith and enthusiasm are followed by doubt and contempt for the silliness of the nuns. She discovers that she has exchanged the trivialities of society for the trivialities of the convent, and her spirit is tortured with loss of faith in the real presence in the sacrament. The opportunity of escaping from the convent is thrown in her way. The portress leaves the keys on a nail. Evelyn Innes, now Sister Teresa, opens the door

"At that moment the pigeons left their roosts and flew towards the fields. The fields were shining in the morning light; thrush and cuckoo were calling, the spring moved among the first primroses, and Evelyn stood watching the spring-tide.

"She had only to take a step to regain her life in the world, but she could not take that step. She no longer even seemed to desire it. In the long months she had been kept waiting a change had taken place in her. She felt that something had broken in her, and she closed the door, and having locked it she hung the keys on the nail."

In that conclusion is contained Mr. Moore's attitude toward the faith of his native country—its final result is to sap character and weaken initiative. Protestantism and Agnosticism leave the mind free. And when, under new influences, Mr. Moore began to write of Ireland, this thought lay continually in the background of his work. But the conclusion of the whole matter is of little importance in *Sister Teresa;* the strength of the book lies in the mastery with which the subject is handled—the gradual and slow collapse of a fine and beautiful nature. Despite his early courses Mr. Moore is by instinct more a disciple of Flaubert than Zola, and his manner in this stage of his development recalls the author of *Madame Bovary,* schooled by later students of feminine psychology, and among them Henry James.

The relation of the Catholic Faith to the impulsive and passionate in human nature is the ground of character study in *Sister Teresa,* and this *motif* is carried over into the novels Mr. Moore wrote after he fell, for a brief period, under the influence of Mr. W. B. Yeats. The short stories of *The Untilled Field* (1903) exhibit the healthy instincts of man checked by sacerdotalism; and in the poetical romance of *The Lake* (1905) we see a priest first discovering his nature as a man when he becomes conscious of sex. It is difficult, however, to believe that the thoughts and emotions of Father Oliver Gogarty, who falls in love with the schoolmistress of his parish, are wholly his own, for something of the Parisian when he thinks of women mingles with the ideas of the seminary priest. Father

Oliver abandons his Church, not because he has learned an intellectual doubt of her doctrines, but because he is a man of sensitive character fascinated by the body as well as the soul of Rose Leicester, and his fall from grace brings doctrines toppling down in a common catastrophe. Only three characters in the book are of any account—Father Oliver, Rose Leicester and Moran, the curate, who is cursed with spasmodic temptations to drink. The villagers, so far as they appear, are shadows, people made in the study by a writer who knows nothing about them. But if he fails to render the peasantry Mr. Moore describes the country-side of Ireland with great beauty. The story of Father Oliver is directly opposed to the tragedy of Sister Teresa's life. He resolves to leave the Church, and to Rose, the cause of his defection, he writes :

> "I began to look upon myself as a somewhat superficial person whose religious beliefs had yielded before the charm of a pretty face and a winsome personality. But this view of the question no longer seems superficial. The very contrary seems true. And the superficial ones are those who think that it is only in the Scriptures that we may discover whether we have a right to live. Our belief in books rather than in Nature is one of humanity's most curious characteristics, and a very irreligious one, it seems to me ; and I am glad to think it was your sunny face that raised up my crushed instincts, that brought me back to life, and ever since you have been associated in my mind with the sun and the spring-tide."

Father Oliver is the most entirely lovable character created by Mr. Moore, and the book in which he is protagonist, abandoning realism, is frankly poetic and romantic treatment of psychological character study. Real in the strict sense of the word the characters are not, for their letters embody ideas belonging to an experience far wider than their own, and Rose Leicester writes too well. But this is a fault inherent in all epistolary narrative from the time of Richardson.

Since Mr. Moore appeared nearly thirty years ago as the first champion in this country of Zola, Flaubert and the French realists theories and ideals in fiction have

changed more than once, and not least with Mr. Moore himself. He has lived long enough to be regarded as belonging to a past by the younger generation; and, further, the variety of his work and his detachment from factions and literary coteries do not make for wide popularity or ready recognition from an ordinary public. To many his autobiographies and critical essays are but examples of affectation and pose, his recantations of old and adoption of new forms of worship evidence of instability and weak-mindedness. But consistency is the virtue of petty minds, and the man who, like Mr. Moore, seeks for a religion in which he shall be priest and people is fated never to find it. For beneath all his changes, even in the wastes of Zolaism, Mr. Moore never lost sight of the fact that there were in the world Protestantism and Catholicism, and as late as the years in which he wrote *Hail and Farewell* the burden of choice between the two still lay heavy upon him. As he has never been able to choose to himself a religion, so he has never been able to choose to himself an art. His methods in fiction, his judgments upon art have changed continually, but he has never entirely changed himself, for he has never wholly been converted to any creed or artistic faith. His temper is the temper of the critic and inquirer who can only wonder at the faiths by which others stand. He announces his opinions as authoritatively as Ruskin, and, like Ruskin, he is always stimulating when most perverse. *Modern Painting* (1893), despite limitations of prejudice and insufficient knowledge, is one of the general books on painting, written in the last three decades, best worth reading; and the miscellaneous essays of *Impressions and Opinions* (1890) contain criticism of literature which is never derivative, but the direct expression of an individual mind. It is refreshing to see Balzac throned above Shakespeare, to learn that Meredith's style has neither light nor magic, to hear that Thackeray is a middle-class writer, that Turgenieff is the most subtle of all novelists, and that nobody ever wrote English as beautifully as Pater. But it is in the guise of the candid friend that Mr. Moore is at his best, demonstrating the insignificance of literature written by Roman Catholics, gently reminding actresses that "the ideal mother"

cannot be the great artist, passing strictures upon the "domestic" and respectable literature of the latter part of the nineteenth century, signalised by the advent of clubs for men of letters, where a solemn decorum reigns, the *Nineteenth Century* lies on the table and stories can only be told in a corner. This is all entirely refreshing, but as a final attitude of mind little more than a tardy survival of the period of the young French Romantics, when Hugo was coming to his own and Gautier wore flaming red waistcoats. The stolid and the respectable have written well in their day; even Mr. Moore has a kind word for Wordsworth. He can more safely be followed when he praises than when he blames. His estimates are too personal, and he admits that his dislikes are a matter of temperamental prejudice he cannot overcome. We lose faith in the critic who sees little but good reporting in Mr. Hardy, and fails to recognise in him a range and comprehension, a poetical vision, which is certainly more profound and significant than that of Balzac. It is well Mr. Moore has the grace to disclaim all knowledge of criticism as a science. Yet he is not wholly without principles. Of the novel worthy of the name he demands that it shall be realistic, that it shall concern itself with character rather than with incident, that its narrative shall be presented rhythmically. If realism has not always been his aim the second and third principles have never been lost to sight. Mr. Moore is French in his love of lucidity and logic, but he is not by instinct an unshirking realist of the French school, though he educated himself upon French models in his youth, and so successfully that in *A Mummer's Wife* and *Esther Waters* he produced novels of definite importance not only as manifestoes but as influences upon the work of younger men. In *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* he turned to a different aim—slowly evolved study of character in a setting of ethical and religious argument worked in the author's peculiar vein: and latterly, in a more subdued manner, he has written *poetic* fiction in *The Lake* and personal confession in the spirit of *romantic* disillusion in *Hail and Farewell*. Different as have been the aims by which Mr. Moore has been actuated it would not be difficult, even without the help of title-pages, to

recognise his publications for the work of one hand. His mind is receptive and plastic, but he shapes his new methods and enthusiasms by a single mould, as statuettes of identical form may be cast in different metals. And though for many years Mr. Moore has not been a popular or an influential author, his later work is in true literary quality on a higher plane than the early realistic novels which first won him a reputation, distinctive as they were and beyond the range of other men. If gifts of craftsmanship, style and lucidity, and the possession of ideas can in themselves serve to redeem a name from the danger of falling into oblivion, Mr. Moore is not likely soon to be forgotten. In the years of drought following the decline of the great Victorian novel Mr. Moore appeared not only as a forerunner of the newer fiction, with which we are more directly concerned in this volume, but as a novelist who endures well the scrutiny of comparison with any who have begun to write since his youth.

George Robert Gissing, 1857–1903.

George Gissing, a few years younger than Mr. Moore, was another sign of the times, a severe realist, not in consequence of a theory of literary methods adopted from others, but in his own right and as a result of unhappy experience. He has been described as the "historian of the middle classes," and, if this leaves something to be added, it gives the chief content and character of his work. Yet Gissing was himself unsympathetic toward the lower middle classes, and especially toward those into whose domestic lives poverty with all its sordid followers intruded. In *Born in Exile* he describes his hero watching the carriages of the wealthy and fortunate drive in and out of the park, noting the manner of leisured ease in the occupants of the carriages and the obsequious attention of the crowd, feeling that by temperament and education his place was with these and not with the shabby throngs of the pavement. In the musings of his hero George Gissing revealed his own mind. His attitude is always that of a man wronged. The lot should have fallen to him in pleasant places, in a dignified old-world house with a quiet garden, a roomy library stocked with carefully chosen books, and a sufficient income to free him from

the cares of earning a livelihood, in order that he might spend his hours in leisurely study and the bettering of his own powers. Instead of this, alternations of garret and cellar were his dwelling, the common parks of London his garden, the reading-room of the British Museum his library, and for many years, according to himself, he knew no place to wash in save the unattractive lavatory of the museum.

Gissing's lot was hard; but it may be that unconsciously he magnified his sufferings. From the age of twenty-five onward he seems always to have been able to earn a small livelihood. Temperamentally he was debarred from contentment and happiness; but it was possible for him to live and eat during the greater part of his working years, though his surroundings may have been drab and dreary. To the end he bore a grudge against life: he was the student and solitary condemned to manufacture fiction for money. He was not unfriendly, but shyness, absence of tact, and an inability to stoop to the common ways of preferment hampered him. To this it may be added that he married twice and disasterously to his happiness on each occasion. The wonder cannot be great, therefore, that Gissing walked through life a man embittered. In his later years his income was better, and in *Veranilda* (1904) he turned from writing realistic novels of contemporary middle-class life to a romance of Rome in the time of Belisarius, and in *Will Warburton* (1905), his last complete novel, although he returns to mean streets, the tone is kindlier and more gentle. Neither of these, however, can be accounted typical of his work, and the latter was written in an easy mood as a money-making book. In good and comfortable circumstances Gissing would have been another man: his nature was friendly and sympathetic, but years of struggle with poverty and ill-success hardened him into a mood of revolt against the kind of life he knew well and hated intensely. We must take Gissing as the social world and his own mistakes of judgment made him—a man labouring under a sense of the injustice of circumstance.

His boyhood and youth might well have been spent under conditions less promising. His father, resident at Wakefield, where Gissing was born, was a man of intel-

lectual attainments. George Gissing received a good education, and soon gave evidence of literary ability. At Owen's College, Manchester, he won a Shakespeare scholarship, an English poem prize and a prize for classics. Unfortunately his career at Owen's College broke down, and he disappeared to live for some years almost as an outcast. He was a clerk in Liverpool, then crossed to America to earn his living indifferently as a classical tutor and a gas-fitter. In 1877 he returned to Europe and was able to spend a period of quiet study at Jena. In 1878 he was in England and published at his own expense a novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, which proved a financial failure and effected nothing save the impoverishment of the author, who was flung back upon tutorage and journalism.

With *The Unclassed* (1884) and *Demos* (1886) Gissing first showed his power, though these are wanting in his more mature skill. The former is a story of two girls who rescue themselves from the pavement to live clean and womanly lives, the latter a study of Socialism and its influence upon the working classes. *Demos* displays qualities and characteristics which marked Gissing's work throughout—thoroughness, patience, the closest observation. Many pages show him the true artist, not merely the classical scholar gone astray, and, on the other hand, there are many pages of dull narrative, when he writes without inspiration and evidently without pleasure. After reading only a few pages of Gissing nobody could mistake him for the writer of commercial fiction; but there are large tracts in every book which leave us unexhilarated and wearied. The result of these drab spaces is, perhaps, to impress upon us more strongly pictures of those sordid purlieus of life Gissing commonly paints. But this was not the intention of his duller passages; they represent failure to write, not purposive realism.

These two early novels set the tone and pitch of Gissing's writing for many years. *Thyrza* (1887) is the story of a factory girl, endowed with finer thought and feeling than her fellows, beset with the gross squalor and misery of life in South London. *The Nether World* (1889) is a realistic picture of misery, vice and heartrending struggle for bread among the sunken multitudes of Clerkenwell.

And in this struggle we see that the battle is not to the idealist nor the race to the eager and hopeful, but to circumstances which overpower all alike. It was not, however, till he wrote *New Grub Street* (1891) that Gissing met with any recognition of the quality and power of his work. Yet it is by no means one of his best books. Its direct appeal in subject matter to the ordinary critic and man of letters probably accounted in a degree for the greater measure of notice the book received. *New Grub Street* is not autobiographical: but the story of the conscientious and responsible artist who fails of success, while the writer of commonplace fiction prospers, is a theme upon which Gissing could write with feeling and intensity. *Denzil Quarrier* (1892) removes the scene to a life of easier circumstances; and in Lilian we find one of the most attractive of Gissing's feminine characterisations. The book is an attack upon the immorality of those marriage laws which bind a woman to a common criminal who has grossly deceived her. Lilian chooses to live with another man whom she can love, but the force of public opinion is too strong for her and her story ends in suicide. Apart from the character of Lilian *Denzil Quarrier* is not a very successful book; nor free in passages from a failing we can rarely attribute to Gissing—exaggeration and melodrama. To the same year belongs *Born in Exile* (1892), a longer, more ambitious and far more striking book. Here again is a hint of autobiography in the struggle between religious belief and doubt in the mind of the hero, who is a strange mixture of strong idealism and base hypocrisy. Ambitious to rise in the world and meet with cultivated society he fights to persuade himself into a belief in the Christian Creeds, that he may take clerical orders and receive the hall-mark of respectability. The attempt collapses, both on account of its inherent falsity and the crooked perversion of the hero's character. Gissing never surpassed this remarkable study of the complicated character of Godwin Peak, idealist and materialist, who continually excites our contempt with his double-dealing and persevering efforts to lure himself into a wholly false state of mind and yet never wholly alienates our sympathy. Never in fiction has a finer picture been drawn of the man whose environ-

ment irks him, till he is driven into retreat, exhausted and wearied by a guerilla warfare with sleepless circumstance. *The Odd Women* (1893) is not so strong or complex a book, but it is not less pitilessly realistic. It paints the lot of superfluous and indigent gentlewomen, and the unhappy fate of a girl who marries for the sake of a home.

At this stage, although there is good characterisation and strong writing in passages, Gissing showed signs of having overworked the seam of his experience and observation. In *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894), a satire on middle-class vulgarity, and *The Town Traveller* (1898) he attempts to extract ore from worn-out workings. And this is also true of *The Whirlpool* (1897), which has for its motive the fatal spell of the pleasures and excitements of London.

In these later years Gissing did better and certainly more attractive work outside the field of fiction. His *Charles Dickens* (1898) is the best book ever written on another and very different historian of the London streets. It shows how thoroughly and sympathetically he had read his Dickens, how in a measure he derived inspiration from him. Yet he could not, like Dickens, recognise gladly the humour as well as the misery of the underworld. Dickens was as earnest as Gissing, he sympathised no less with the helpless and unhappy, but he did not, like Gissing, doubt the integrity of the universe, and he could, therefore, be joyous where Gissing was moved only to despairing wrath. *By the Ionian Sea* (1901), the fruit of a holiday, reflects a side of Gissing's nature starved in the years of poverty and struggle—the instincts of a gentle and scholarly mind. But the best of his later writings is the delightful and personal *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), a happy mingling of autobiography and fiction, reflecting the musings of a recluse. In this book Gissing raises the veil and shows the intensity of the mental suffering through which he passed in the dark years, when it was only with difficulty he preserved unspoiled those things which are " quiet, wise and good."

The world at large prefers happy people, and rightly, for, as Stevenson inadequately remarked, a happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. Unhappy men have rarely won great honour in their

generation, and Gissing was not only unhappy—he made no attempt to hide the fact. Failing happiness other sure roads to success are to be sentimental or amusing; and Gissing was neither, he was harshly in earnest and he could not stoop merely to entertain. Perhaps he came within the range of Samuel Butler's half-humorous contempt for the last enemy to be destroyed—serious-mindedness. In personal intercourse he could be genial, but he never overcame the intellectual complacency against which his schoolfellows chafed. Meredith's "good wind of laughter" would have cleared his heart and brain. But he could not laugh freely and easily; and a steady reading of his novels is to be overweighted and oppressed as on a dark and windless day. It is unnatural to feel no breath of air in the open, to see no movement of the clouds; and the tense unhappiness of Gissing's novels is as unnatural. The utmost depths of wretchedness cannot be without moments of forgetfulness.

Not only is the setting of Gissing's tales grey and sordid, the style falls into a harmony with the matter; it is a style that may be described as good standard English without special individuality or charm. This statement applies strictly only to the novels and short stories: in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, with the change of atmosphere, the style takes upon itself more light and colour. The greatness of Gissing's work lies in its strength, independence and thoroughness. If he has little humour and few graces, he is equally without petty faults and weaknesses. He is above the suspicion of exaggerating and making dark mainly for the sake of effect. What he sees he transcribes patiently and slowly, sometimes with a laboriousness that is unnecessary and tiresome, but he never descends to sentiment, or attempts an appearance of strength by violent methods.

Rudyard Kipling, b. 1865.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling is a younger man than either of the two novelists just named, but he began to publish fiction almost as early, and by the year 1890 he enjoyed an extraordinary fame. He is also to be placed here by right of his far-ranging influence upon the development of the English short story and novel. Whether Mr. Kipling is a great writer is a question that

may fairly be asked, but that his early tales represent a marked and new evolvement of the short story cannot be denied. Literature constantly tends to stereotype itself by formal methods, and as constantly attempts are made to naturalise literature to the standard of common life. Mr. Kipling's short story was primarily a colloquialisation of fiction for the sake of mess-rooms, railway carriages and other places where literature as an art is not greatly in request. *Plain Tales from the Hills* first appeared as short stories in the corner of a newspaper; and the stories immediately succeeding these were published in the paper covers of a railway library. The aim of these tales was to entertain, but the younger Mr. Kipling was a realist of the notebook order, who rendered to the life the snipped and slangy dialogue, the morals and the manners of Anglo-Indians. The young sub-editor showed no marked inventive power in his newspaper stories; but the method was fresh, the note that of a writer who was strung to harmony with the activities, vain and useful, of men and women in the world, the irony of his humour was excellent, he possessed an admirable knack for journalistic catch-phrasing; and, further, he adopted the old trick, first largely practised by Defoe, of taking the reader into his confidence, and thus cajoling him into a belief in the reality of narrative and people. "Mrs. Hauksbee," one tale opens, "was sometimes nice to her own sex. Here is a story to prove this; and you can believe just as much as ever you please." However jaded the reader his attention is roused to wakefulness by such a beginning. The author, again, frequently remarks *en passant* upon another story of the same kind which he is reminded of by an incident related, and this lends an atmosphere of verisimilitude to the narrative in hand. The same end is served by the repeated appearance of Strickland and the famous Mrs. Hauksbee.

Plain Tales from the Hills, first collected in 1887, touches many sides of Indian life—native, official, military, social. The tales are written in easy and conversational manner, flow lightly without reflection on higher themes of philosophy and metaphysics, which is no more than "playing bricks with words" to Mr. Kipling and his

gallery of characters. But the pathos of many of these stories is better than the humour, and that is high praise. The story of Lispeth, the hill-girl, pining for the English lover who never intended to remember her, of the subaltern boy who commits suicide because he is too sensitive to endure the tolerant code of Anglo-Indian morals ('Thrown Away'), of the half-caste's slavery to opium ('The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows')—in these and others the irony and the pathos of circumstance are delineated clearly, simply and without unavailing sentimentality. On the other hand the stream of humour in ironic vein never fails, nor that mark of literary calling, the gift of phrase-making. If there is little, save in a few of these tales, to mark any consciousness of the beauty of the physical universe, the light and splendour of the Orient, it is not, as Mr. Kipling has since abundantly shown, because the author cares for none of these things, but because the character and setting of the narrative exclude them.

Soldiers Three (1888) was the first of six collections of short tales (1888–9) in *Wheeler's Railway Library*. In these and in other military tales Mr. Kipling introduces Private Mulvaney with his two friends, Ortheris and Learoyd. A prodigality of praise has been lavished upon the author's pictures of Tommy Atkins and his life; but the Mulvaney tales, on a dispassionate reading, convey little but a sense of strain and tedious artifice. The exaggerated and impossible situations, the difficult joking of 'Krishna Mulvaney' and other of these tales is wearisome, the impossible brogue of Mulvaney exasperating. Dialect has its place, but its representation in print must always be an artifice, and the less that artifice is laboured the better. The best of the Mulvaney stories, 'My Lord the Elephant,' belongs to a later collection (*Many Inventions*); but, for the most part, beer, uncouth thoughts, laboured dialect, impossible and ridiculous adventures are the substance of these stories, and their merit is beneath the standard of Mr. Kipling's early writing. *In Black and White*, of the same series, treats chiefly of native life. Slang, dialect, meretricious attempts at realism disappear, and the tales skilfully depict the colour, dust, smell and thought of an Oriental world foreign to the Western mind. But the early volumes

which have retained their popularity with the ordinary reader are *Under the Deodars*, *The Phantom 'Rickshaw* and *Wee Willie Winkie*, and that because the contents of these slight volumes are the work of the born story-teller. A knack of phrase, of writing dialogue in quick interplay of colloquialisms, of packing much incident and emotion into a small space, united to raise Mr. Kipling to the position of phenomenal popularity he, at one time, enjoyed. With the uncritical matter is of no account and style a vain thing ; the public performer who rehearses his tricks vivaciously, exciting the surprise rather than the admiration of the spectators, can count upon making his bow to a storm of plaudits. The majority of those who read novels or go to the playhouse wish only to forget for an hour the world that is too much with them, and they are grateful to the acrobat who carries them out of themselves without exacting the pain of intellectual effort or fixed attention. And this Mr. Kipling exactly achieved with his vivacity and *ad hominem* appeals. When, in later life, he assumed the rôle of Imperialistic prophet, a task for which the Hebraic obtuseness of his ethic fitted him, his popularity waned and half the seats in the auditorium emptied.

Raciness, vigour, and a journalistic knack rather than a literary gift, give realism to the tales in the collections last-named. *Under the Deodars* chiefly contains sketches of Anglo-Indian life at Simla or elsewhere, tales which titillate the taste for scarcely innocent flirtations and jaded intrigues in a society where morals are easy and the Deity who made the ten commandments is recognised by all, but, like the tax-collector, forgotten in the intervals between his visits. The story which gives its title to *The Phantom 'Rickshaw* might have been one of the best of ghost-stories. The piercing refrain of the spectre-woman's cry to the man who has injured her, " Please forgive me : it's all a mistake, a hideous mistake ! " is repeated with quite extraordinary effect ; and the trick has been imitated by later writers of ghost-stories, Mr. E. F. Benson among them. Unfortunately the story is ruined, as Mr. J. M. Robertson has pointed out, by a misrepresentation of the obvious and natural attitude of the hero's betrothed. She would have pitied his mental

derangement instead of flaming into anger with him. And it is not infrequently that Mr. Kipling fails in this way, for he is occupied chiefly with story-telling, not the analysis of character, and his people react to circumstance in an impossible manner. Thus in 'The Strange Ride' the unbelievable stupidity of Gunga Dass, if he be a sophisticated Brahmin, puts the finishing touch to the grotesque incredibility of a macabre tale. And the child-stories of *Wee Willie Winkie* have only to be read by the side of Mr. Kenneth Grahame's *Golden Age* to expose the impossibly grown-up thought of the children. From this indictment the two drummer boys of the stirring sketch 'Drums of the Fore and Aft' must be excepted. In none of these early stories does a character, except perhaps Mrs. Hauksbee, the managing dame of Anglo-Indian drawing-rooms, emerge with that degree of convincing reality which prints itself on the imagination. It would be unfair to ask of Mr. Kipling that he should think in these early tales; the matter is too slight, and he makes none of the pretences of his later volumes; but character-drawing we have a right to expect, and we do not find it even within the range compassed by many a second-rate novelist. High spirits, vivid phrasing, an instinct for dramatic situation, humour, a gift of swift and vigorous story-telling, all these we may allow to Mr. Kipling. And with so much in hand he almost succeeds in hiding the inadequacy of his characterisation; yet we remember his people, if at all, by tags extracted from notebooks and used as labels—they are manufactured. The artifices by which he depicts the British soldier in India have already been noted: his partial failure in the stories of Anglo-Indian society is less remarkable, because his types merely dally with the passing hour. The child-stories have charm; but the children are grown-up, save for grammar and pronunciation. The tales of native life are a different matter, and more difficult to judge; but the metaphysical bent of the Oriental mind is certainly missed by the crude matter-of-factness of the Anglo-Saxon. Yet, despite faults in style and form and thinness of character-drawing, we are compelled to accept Stevenson's admission that "there is a tide of life" in all these stories.

Between the years 1890 and 1897 we come upon a second period in Mr. Kipling's literary activity. He had now become famous, had married and settled with his wife in America for several years. In 1891 he wrote his first long story, *The Light that Failed*, which appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine*. In the original form of the tale, as it appeared in the pages of this magazine, we meet with the hero, Dick Heldar, artist and war-correspondent, on his return to England after ten years of wandering life. Maisie, the woman who loved him in early days, appears from the past and nurses him through an illness which ends in his blindness and their marriage. In the new and enlarged form of the tale Heldar dies, unmarried and blind, at the seat of war in the Soudan. More than to any of Mr. Kipling's books to this has fallen noisy panegyric and angry denunciation. It illustrates forcibly his conception of men and women. Maisie fails to suggest more than a flutter of moods in which traces of personality are lost; and Heldar and his artist friend talk after the fashion of men who were once in touch with the courtesies of life but have chosen to forget them, and evidently with willingness. The hero is an exact and life-like portrait of the underbred and overbearing young Englishman. The words which spring to his lips when taken off his guard aptly reveal his character. If he collides with a passenger in the street he recoils with an oath; if he is accidentally pushed into the gutter he mutters, "All right. That's another nick in the score. I'll jostle you later on"; when the smoke of the machine-gun blows back in his nostrils and howls of the wounded rend the darkness, "wild with delight at the sounds and the smells," he shouts aloud, "God is very good—I never thought I'd hear this again. Give 'em hell, men. Oh, give 'em hell!" The story, the atmosphere, the dialogue of *The Light that Failed*, even when the dialogue turns on art and painting, alternate between the extremes of the uncouth and violent. Mr. Kipling is never coarse as Gorky is coarse, nor is he suggestive like De Maupassant; but like Ibsen he can be vulgar. The author fails to recognise of what sort are his characters in *The Light that Failed*, evidently holding them to be typical of the vigorous and fine instincts of the British race. Characterisation is con-

fused, and, further, though in form a novel, *The Light that Failed* is in effect only a short story elongated.

In the years named Mr. Kipling further published *The Naulhaka* (1892), written in collaboration with Mr. Wolcott Balestier, and volumes of short stories not exclusively Indian in their setting, including *Life's Handicap* (1890) and *Many Inventions* (1893). These tales are as energetic, but they are not so vivacious as the earlier stories: the sentences are longer, the paragraphs show more construction and betray the fact that Mr. Kipling is not so young as he once was and is trying to live up to a tradition. *Captains Courageous* (1897) is more a sketch than a story of fishermen on the Grand Banks, and illustrates the author's faculty for representing any aspect of life with a wonderful air of realism. But with all the care he has given to this book he has scarcely succeeded in distinguishing the characters from one another. They are worked up from material stored in the notebooks. By far the finest and most original work of Mr. Kipling in this period is to be found in the two *Jungle Books* (1894–5). These, with *Kim*, which may be counted as falling into another period, are the high-water of his attainment. In the *Jungle Books* wolves, tigers, panthers, monkeys and snakes speak, we are introduced to the customs and laws of the jungle, and hear the story of Mowgli, the man-cub, a foundling of the wolves who grows up with the pack till he returns to the village, and at length comes back to the jungle to avenge himself on Shere Khan, the tiger, his enemy. Mr. Kipling has never written better prose and better dialogue than in these stories; and the charm of simplicity and naturalness pervades them all.

Kim (1901) is Mr. Kipling's one true novel, and after the *Jungle Books* his most successful piece of writing, although his instincts seem naturally to turn to the short story. In *Kim* he paints a collective picture of the whole of modern India, its life both native and European, its religion, its politics, its esoteric cults, its mystery, its burning heat, and all the richness of that strange and cosmopolitan land. The decline in Mr. Kipling's originality and vigour was already a subject of regret when he appeared with his most ambitious and most powerful

book. The figures of Kim, the little English lad, left to grow up among low-caste Hindoos, of the old and yellow-skinned Tibetan lama, of Hurree Babu, of Mahmet Ali, the horse dealer, of English soldiers and officers, the pictures of crowded and busy life in Lahore, Benares and on the Grand Trunk Road are drawn with a vividness, swiftness and unified interest which the author has not rivalled elsewhere. *Kim* is the one book (apart from the jungle tales) scarcely injured by the journalistic manner, the one book written in the large manner and not in the spirit of the short story. No other single book in English may be compared with *Kim* in its wide and comprehensive representation of the mystery, colour and crowded life of the East. It has been charged against its theme as a whole, that whereas in the earlier part of the book the author makes no question of Kim's ethical relationship to the secret service, in the latter part he cannot help showing his abhorrence of his hero's position, with the result that Kim is stranded without significance in the development of the story. The criticism is rather ingenious than valuable, save in so far as it illustrates again Mr. Kipling's failure to maintain stability in his characterisations. After a good beginning Kim degenerates into the infallible young hero of the boy's book of adventure.

In the later years Mr. Kipling showed no sign of weariness in the production of the short story. *Stalky and Co.* (1899), a school romance, virtually falls into this category, for it is little more than a series of sketches. Among the volumes of collected tales are *The Day's Work* (1898), *Traffics and Discoveries* (1904), *Actions and Reactions* (1909), the delightful animal tales for children, *Just-so Stories* (1902), and *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), a charming medley of fairy and historical lore for young people. If the children of Mr. Kipling's tales are impossible miracles of precocity he has shown in these later books that he can write the best of tales for real children to read.

That Mr. Kipling has been the most phenomenally popular author of our day, that he has ceased to be so for more than a decade, that he has taken upon him to represent the life of the British Empire all over the globe, painting men in aspects diverse beyond the daring of

any other writer, are facts apparent to all. And if an attempt be made to sift in impersonal mood the large body of his work, without deference to the unbridled ecstasies of American criticism, now twenty years old, or the chilliness of the English reviewer in the present, a few further facts emerge clearly—that a large part of Mr. Kipling's painting of life and character is journalism at its best, that he barely, if ever, crosses the line which separates him from creative artists, that his pictures of India are better than his painting of life elsewhere, because in these he draws upon knowledge absorbed in boyhood or derived from his father, that his moments of highest inspiration are in a few poems, but that he is not a great poet, that his sense of literary responsibility is slight, that his chief gift is a splendid knack which often fails him, that he has produced some of the best work in the last twenty-five years and some of the worst, evidently without much perception of the difference. The first point calls for further discussion. No personalities can be found in the wide limits of Mr. Kipling's verse and prose that are distinctive of a great manner in apprehending what is essential in human nature and portraying character that endures with a meaning for all men who read or listen. Characters are not made to live by stringing dialect, technical phrases or slang like beads upon a string; and, in general, this is Mr. Kipling's method of conveying character. The vaunted Mulvaney does not escape this indictment. Dick Heldar and Maisie are unfinished impressionism. In *Kim* he reaches a better standard than elsewhere in prose with the lama, Hurree Babu and the horse dealer, and only fails by a hairbreadth with Kim himself. Yet the true hero of this tale is no human figure but the whole life of India. *Captains Courageous*, *Stalky and Co.* and the later short stories revert to the bead-stringing manner, and characterisation, save in the roughest pattern, is not to be found. In the ballads we need not ask for characterisation, yet in 'The Mary Gloster' Mr. Kipling has drawn the truest and most living of all his human figures. But when the wide field, the innumerable types of men and women drawn, are taken into account, his actual attainment in characterisation is disappointingly slight.

The three writers who have just been passed in survey had developed their idiosyncrasies and characteristics before the beginning of the 'nineties, and two of them were noticeably influencing the growth of English fiction.

Samuel Butler, 1835–1902.

To Samuel Butler, a man of a different mould, another fate was assigned; and it is difficult to know where to place him, for he wrote satirical fiction over forty years ago, yet his originality and intellectual power have only been adequately recognised since his death. If we judge him by the date of his birth he belongs to a generation earlier than any writer who claims a prominent place in this book. But if anyone was placed beyond the limitations of chronology it was Samuel Butler—critic, philosopher, painter, musician, novelist, satirist and scholar, a man so versatile in his attainments, so worthy a hearing whatever the subject on which he wrote, that he is not to be described by any single definition. To the unlearned he is best known as the author of *Erewhon*, his most popular if not his best book. It was his only book to meet with a sale on its appearance; and it was later awarded the praise of the second-hand bookseller in the formula, "very readable, 6d." In his lifetime, beyond the comparative popularity of this book, Butler enjoyed little fame. None of his other works sold. Fortunately he was above the necessity of writing for money. He was educated at Shrewsbury and St. John's College, Cambridge, and took a high place in the Classical Tripos. He refused to take orders because he entertained doubts of the efficacy of infant baptism. A quarrel with his father ensued, and Butler sailed for New Zealand, where in five years on a sheep-run he succeeded in gathering a moderate competence, with which he returned to England to lose a great part of it in unlucky investments. He began to write in New Zealand. *Darwin Among the Machines* (1863), the kernel of *Erewhon*, appeared in the *Christchurch Press*. The book in its present form appeared in 1872, seven years after Butler's return to England. During this period he was chiefly occupied with painting, exhibiting regularly at the Royal Academy, and it was only with *Life and Habit* (1877) that he definitely turned to literature. In humble lodgings

at Clifford's Inn he was content to live for thirty-eight years, pursuing an unvarying routine. His hour of rising, his morning meal, the route of his daily walk to the British Museum, the periods of his cigarettes were exactly regulated. In the evening he composed gavottes and fugues in the manner of Handel, in his eyes the greatest of musicians.

A man who obtruded himself so little on literary society, who was incapable of advertising himself, who walked his own way, who was full of hard sayings displeasing to the Philistine, the professional man of letters, the scholar and the æsthete alike could hardly make a place for himself in his own day. But Butler was not without ambition of fame. His notebooks reveal a conviction that he was writing for the future and that his name would endure. Milton could speak with no greater confidence in himself. And Butler was not deceived. Among writers belonging to the period immediately following that of the great Victorians he is one of the few whose names are little likely to be forgotten by the generations to come. He had no second-hand opinions, his thought was acute and often profound, his gift of satire in prose has not been equalled since Swift, and in his one true novel he showed powers of psychological analysis of the highest order. And, eccentric as he may seem in some of his theories and convictions—in his belief in the feminine authorship of the Odyssey, in his assignation to Handel of a place immeasurably above all musical composers—he advances no theory without thought and knowledge, and he is singularly free from prejudice, cant and crooked vision. The man who satirised church-going religion in his description of the Musical Banks, who threw scorn on conventional ethical standards, who declared that virtue was not a thing to be immoderately indulged, who wrote an ironical treatise on the miraculous element in the Gospels, could yet describe himself as a member of the advanced wing of the Broad Church party and assert that nobody was of any account who did not believe in a kingdom of heaven which was better worth the striving for than anything beside.

He was by instinct a student, a thinker and a critic of science, art and literature in contemporary life. He

combated conventional religion, attacked ecclesiastical conceptions of saintliness, deprecated a morality too earnest, was little moved by visions of the supernatural; but he also turned to rend Darwinism and its exile of the mind, he did not bow to accepted estimates in art, and he had no fear of meeting the classical scholar on his own ground with startling theories which he backed up with evidence stronger than the supports of many a belief which has stood the wear and tear of centuries. Butler never, however, controverted the accepted for the sake of originality. He was entirely free from weak affectations, poses and the temptation to appear different. He was a clear and serious thinker.

His critical work in *Life and Habit* (1877), *Essays on Life, Art and Science* (1904) and other volumes is stimulating and of great interest, but these belong to miscellaneous prose-writing and find no place for discussion here. In *Erewhon* (1872) and *Erewhon Revisited* (1901), however, he wrote satirical fiction, and in *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), a novel of contemporary life. The form in which Butler embodies his satire upon society and religion is not new: the plot idea in *Erewhon* is as old as *Gulliver's Travels* and older, but not since Swift wrote had it been used with so pregnant a gift of irony. Mr. Higgs, a colonist, chances upon a land of fertile plains hidden behind snowy mountains, and dwelling in these plains he discovers a nation governed by a king and queen and ruled by extraordinary perversities of thought, of which the most remarkable was a tolerant pity for moral delinquents, who were regarded as suffering from the chance misfortune of disease, and a stern repression of physical deformity or ill-health, which was punished with fine or imprisonment. The weak and the ill are haled before the courts; but the man who forges a cheque, commits arson or robs with violence "lets it be known to all his friends that he is suffering from a severe fit of immorality, just as we do when we are ill, and they come and visit him with great solicitude." Furthermore, the inhabitants of Erewhon have passed severe measures against the introduction of machinery, in obedience to one of their philosophers who wrote a book describing the great dangers to mankind of the

enormously powerful development of machines, to which man was becoming but a slave and attendant. *Erewhon* contains, in brief, nearly all Butler's favourite concepts and ideas. The excursus upon machines is ridicule of the crude form in which the theory of evolution was first accepted. His picture of Erewhonian topsy-turvy views on morality and health was not merely a diversion in irony. Health and a sufficient competence are positive benefits in any society, and undue emphasis, he held, could be laid on the pursuit of virtue, for the nations we most admire, Greeks and Italians for example, are not those most famed for an austere morality, and " when the righteous man turneth away from the righteousness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is a little naughty and wrong, he will generally be found to have gained in amiability what he has lost in righteousness." *Erewhon* is not woven of one yarn throughout. The description of the Musical Banks is a little heavy-handed, and not particularly good as satire upon perfunctory religious observances ; but the book, as a whole, is much better than *Erewhon Revisited*, which scarcely succeeds in rekindling the earlier ironic manner. It tells how Mr. Higgs returns to Erewhon, after an absence of twenty years, to find a new religion in vogue founded upon his own ascent to heaven when he escaped from the country in a balloon. Though Butler denied any intention of reflecting upon the Gospel narrative the resemblance is unfortunately close. The sequel has more story and is more compact than *Erewhon*, but it is wanting in its terse irony, and is certainly neither so amusing nor so interesting.

More important than either of these satirical tales is the posthumous *Way of All Flesh*, which carries on the work of attacking the system of sham morality under which the ordinary child of the age was educated. The incentive to the novel was supplied by a Miss Eliza Mary Ann Savage, whom Butler first met in 1870 or 1871 ; and he continued to tinker with his manuscript till the time of her death in 1885. She appears in the tale as Alethea. The compass of the book is so wide that it scarcely admits of detailed description. Its chief end is a bitter and earnest attack upon the false standards

inculcated by home, school and university education, standards which Butler, like many youths of every generation, had much pain in outgrowing. The satire is embodied in the conflict of two generations of father and son, first the vulgar and wealthy George Pontifex and his timid clerical son, the Reverend Theobald Pontifex; and secondly between Theobald and his son, Ernest, who is inveigled into taking orders, only to find himself in a wholly false position. The novel is partly autobiographical, and Butler's attacks upon shams are inspired by strong personal feeling. This book, and not *Erewhon Revisited*, should carry as its epigraph the quotation from the Iliad:

> "Him do I hate, even as I hate Hell fire,
> Who says one thing, and hides another in his heart."

For the beginning and end of Butler's writing is a loathing and hatred for crooked vision, darkened counsel, sophistries and the cant of immoderate saintliness. *The Way of All Flesh* is as little likely to commend itself to this or any generation as the novels of Meredith; for, like them, it contains strong, clear thinking, and it is not the book of an idle hour. And, further, Butler shows himself not only the scholar, the critic and the thinker, for in faithful characterisation, in realism of atmosphere and in illumination of satirical humour *The Way of All Flesh* stands with the greatest English novels of the last century. Psychological sensitiveness Butler manifested abundantly, and the power to scheme and plot a large book; but he fails to seize his dramatic situations. *Erewhon Revisited* and *The Way of All Flesh* abound in incidents that a much weaker pen might have turned to far better use than Butler. Like Meredith, however, he was constitutionally incapable of making the most of his opportunities. Like Meredith, moreover, whatever influence he has exercised upon the novel came late, and it confines itself to the few. Among younger novelists Mr. Gilbert Cannan may be named as a writer who directly or indirectly has learned much from Butler, and the tendency of many recent novels to sketch a complete biography, or the story of a family in several generations, is doubtless attributable to Butler.

§ 2

It will be well at this point to place two novelists of an older generation whose work, nevertheless, belongs to recent years, who deserve, also, to be named as influences upon modern and younger writers, although in originality of concept and forcefulness of work they can hardly be counted with Gissing, Butler or Mr. George Moore.

Theodore Watts-Dunton was first in power a critic, secondly a poet, and thirdly a novelist. Yet his single novel won an instant reputation fully equal to its deserts. *Aylwin* (1898) was written many years before its publication, but withheld from the press till the success of the gipsy romance contained in the poem-sequence, *The Coming of Love*, induced the author to print it. In narrative, however, *The Coming of Love* is a sequel to *Aylwin*. The novel succeeded for some years in winning critical and popular admiration, for there is undeniable magic in Watts-Dunston's description of Snowdonia and the wild scenery of West Wales, there is charm in the love-story and in the drawing of the character of Sinfi Lovell, there is pathos and tragic surprise in the narrative, there is interest in the introduction of Rossetti and others under assumed names. Nevertheless the whole book only too obviously betrays its slow and laboured birth; and birth is scarcely the apt word—the tale has been put together, not born. Passages of descriptive writing, thoughts contained in the dialogue or narrative, are beautiful and true, but they survive in detachment; that unity of movement and that development of the characters in a conceivable relationship, which can alone give the illusion of life, are wanting. As a good novel and a truthful rendering of life *Aylwin* fails; its inspiration is an intellectual romanticism, its theme the power of love to reveal the beauty and mystery of the universe; and, considered in this aspect, it is a secondary landmark in the literary history of the period. At a time when the current set toward a mingling of introspective psychology and bare realism it exerted some influence in the direction of poetry and intellectual mysticism.

Walter Theodore Watts-Dunton, 1836–1914.

Mark Rutherford, 1829–1913.

The novelist who was born while Coleridge and Lamb were still alive, who moved in George Eliot's circle of friends, can hardly without violence, it may seem, find a place in a volume which treats, for its purposes, Stevenson and Meredith as belonging to a past, and Mark Rutherford (William Hale White) was in many respects a man of the Victorian epoch; his Radicalism and his rebellion against the doctrines of dissenting Christianity are Victorian in the form of their unorthodoxy, and the English life he depicts is largely Nonconformist and middle-class life of the 'forties and 'fifties. But the novels were the work of his later life, his death is fresh in the memory, and the close realism of his psychology, his impressionistic manner of outlining scenes and incidents suggest a prim and distant resemblance to some writers of the *Yellow Book*. William Hale White led a curious if uneventful life. His father was of lower middle-class stock and successively earned a livelihood as a compositor, a tanner and a door-keeper to the House of Commons. He passed on to his son the incongruous gifts of a love of Byron and a training for the Noncomformist ministry. But Mark Rutherford, to use his pen-name, was expelled from New College, St. John's Wood, for heresy, and abandoned all idea of the ministry. This part of his life is retold in the most autobiographical of his novels, *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* (1887). After leaving his theological seminary he turned journalist and hack-writer, and later became a civil servant with a post in the Admiralty. The means and ample leisure of a civil servant set him free to write his novels, and he soon won the admiration of a small but enthusiastic circle of readers. H. D. Traill was among the first to recognise the originality of his work; and he has been declared a greater than Meredith. In fifteen years he wrote half a dozen novels, of no great length, delineating the life and mind of that part of the Radical middle class whose thoughts centre in the activities of little dissenting chapels. There are, besides the novel already named, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (1881), *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance* (1885), *Miriam's Schooling* (1890), *Catherine Furze* (1894) and *Clare Hopgood* (1896).

Mark Rutherford, if occasionally he suggest comparisons, has a place peculiarly his own. His style is staid, his manner grave; but his ideas, religious and moral, are often distinctly unorthodox. His stories are without sensational incident, his people belong to drab corners of life, yet there is an intensity in his pictures of trivial, sad, weary and unimaginative lives which compels recognition, and we discover beneath his searching realism a deep fund of sympathy for everything save cant and humbug. In a quiet way Mark Rutherford has won for himself a reputation which will probably endure.

§ 3

The influence of French models in fiction during the last quarter of the nineteenth century has been noted, and the typical exemplification of French realistic methods in the early novels of Mr. George Moore. In these he anticipated the aims and ideals of younger writers, many of whom found encouragement and opportunity with the publication of the *Yellow Book;* for the editor, Harland, was strongly influenced by the French spirit, although by its delicacy, gaiety and love of beauty in form rather than its tendency to logic and exactness. In this group, among the naturalists in the following of Maupassant and Zola, the best work was done by Hubert Crackanthorpe and George Egerton (Mrs. Golding Bright). The former died young and George Egerton has lived to change her style and methods, and her work will be noted in a subsequent section with that of other women novelists. Harland and Ernest Dowson wrote slight and impressionistic tales with a leaning to the more serious method of Crackanthorpe; and with them may be counted the journalist and poet, H. D. Lowry, who came under the influence of Henley and the *National Observer.* Among others of the same group who, either during the life of the *Yellow Book* and *Savoy* or later, wrote some fiction, were Mr. Arthur Symons, Max Beerbohm, John Davidson, Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. Laurence Housman.

Hubert Crackanthorpe is now remembered by few; his life was short, he was much in earnest, and is,

therefore, now practically forgotten. In *The Times* of Christmas Day, 1896, appeared a report that Crackanthorpe's body had been found in the Seine. Two months before this he had disappeared from his hotel; and it is probable that death was of his own choosing. The general attitude toward his work is well expressed by *The Times*' comment: "His volume of short stories, called *Wreckage*, contained much that was good, though the impression it left was unpleasant . . . there was ground to hope that increasing years would bring greater breadth of vision." After his death the volume of *Last Studies* (1897) was published, prefaced with a laboured poem by Stopford Brooke and a critical introduction, grudging and not peculiarly illuminating, from the pen of Henry James. The latter is puzzled by the "predominance of the consciousness of the cruelty of life, the expression, from volume to volume, of the deep insecurity of things"; and he breathes the pious belief that these were but youthful weaknesses which Crackanthorpe, had he lived, would have outgrown. Henry James, the student of the leisured and cultured margins of life, shows here a little obtuseness. Hubert Crackanthorpe was a modest, gentle-natured young Englishman, with a love of country scenery and field sports, and a sincere repulsion from the sordid misery which represented the ordinary life of so large a proportion of town populations. Inspired in his art by the short story of Maupassant he garners his material from direct observation of life, writing straightforwardly and uncompromisingly to show exactly what he sees. His method is summarised by Mr. Symons—"bare, hard, persistent realism, the deliberately unsympathetic record of sordid things." Crackanthorpe was neither a prophet of smooth things nor one who stooped to make the bid for popularity. Among that youthful band who contributed to the *Yellow Book* the name of Crackanthorpe stands out. His work showed high promise; and his early death was a real loss to English fiction.

Hubert Crackanthorpe, 1865–1896.

In 1892 Crackanthorpe was, with W. H. Wilkins, editor of *The Albemarle*, and in the following year he published *Wreckage* (1893), a volume of short stories. The title,

upon its face, carries the subject of the book : the flotsam and the jetsam of humanity, men and women driven to the last end of despair and suicide, these are the characters whom we meet in a book which deserves to be remembered, for every story in the collection reflects the gentleness and simplicity of a sincere and thoughtful mind. And Crackanthorpe writes with a clearness and directness well suited to the subjects he handles. His treatment is admirable, his phrases and analysis skilful. He writes, for example, of a sordid London street : " There was an untidiness about the neighbourhood, an untidiness that was almost indecent, the untidiness of a bed that has been slept in." In a single stroke he pictures the dingy, neglected street. And, broadly speaking, this is the manner of Crackanthorpe. He does not make the mistake of Zola, or of Mr. George Moore in *A Mummer's Wife*, of wearying with photographic completeness in representation. The two best stories in the book are ' A Conflict of Egoisms ' and the astonishingly powerful sketch, ' A Dead Woman,' possibly suggested by Maupassant's ' Inconsolables.' In the latter we are introduced to the dull atmosphere of a village inn, moribund since the death of the publican's wife. The husband sinks into a state of apathy until he is roused by learning from the slatternly barmaid that his wife was guilty of misconduct with a local farmer, his friend. The blow at first overwhelms, and then excites him to anger. A fierce quarrel follows, but in the end we see husband and lover discussing, over friendly drinks, the physical attractions of the dead woman and the course of the guilty love-affair. It is repulsive and unpleasant ; but it rings true. Stories like this, and others in the same manner, were not directed to gain a favourable hearing with the many, and Crackanthorpe had to meet with much reviling and antagonism. Yet *Wreckage* contains some of the finest and simplest of short stories ; and it is impossible not to recognise in the style and high seriousness of these tales the work of a man who felt strongly and looked out on life with grave earnestness. To Crackanthorpe was given a sensitiveness which felt the pain of life more keenly than its happiness. And he writes severely because he is utterly sincere, determined to be faithful to that which he has seen and known.

None of the stories in *Sentimental Studies* (1895) is as arresting as several in *Wreckage*. The title suggests a partial change in manner, but it is by no means a good title, and better suited to a volume by Harland or Dowson. 'Battledore and Shuttlecock' is a realistic tale in the manner of *Wreckage:* the 'Set of Village Tales,' at the end of the volume, are, however, of a slightly different *genre*. They illustrate Crackanthorpe's power of reproducing environment with a clear simplicity. A little bare, a little melancholy these sketches, yet they betray the essential gentleness of Crackanthorpe's character. They suggest sharp and clean etching with a brilliant surface effect.

The tiny volume, *Vignettes* (1896), is chiefly of interest in introducing us to Crackanthorpe's workshop. The book is a collection of excerpts from his notebooks, jottings of impressions in London and abroad; and they show how he learned to observe, taught himself to recognise the chief attributes of each scene, and patiently set himself to convey these to paper. As an example of his method one of the vignettes may be quoted.

> "The entertainment draws to its close, for it is past four in the morning. In the hall, several of the oil-lamps have already sputtered out; the rest are burning with dull, blear-eyed weariness. A score of unshaven Spaniards, close muffled in capas and lowering sombreros, sprawl in limp attitudes over empty benches, and the circle of gaudy women that fill the stage sit listless, pasty-faced, somnolent.
>
> And then, for the last time, the frenzy passes. The guitars start their sudden, bitter twanging, and the women their wild rhythmical beating of hands.
>
> Amid volleys of harsh, frenzied plaudits la Monolita dances, swaying her soft, girlish frame with a tense, exasperated restraint; supple as a serpent; coyly, subtly lascivious; languidly curling and uncurling her bare white arms.
>
> Out in the cold night air, as I hasten home through the narrow, sleeping streets, her soft, girlish frame still sways before my eyes, to the bitter twanging of guitars."

'Anthony Garstin's Courtship,' a tale of tragic wooing among Cumberland country-folk and the first story in Crackanthorpe's posthumous volume, *Last Studies*, is one of his finest and strongest pieces of writing, a dialect story simply and broadly narrated in a manner that would not shame Mr. Hardy. The other two stories of the last volume do not, however, reach the standard of his best work.

Crackanthorpe was not wholly without humour, but in his writing it appears only as a tinge of irony. He had no faculty for suffering the defects of life gladly; and tolerance of painful incongruity is the foundation of humour. Crackanthorpe would not have denied that life had its glad moments and margins of satisfaction, but he looked straight before him and saw only the broad page of unhappiness between the margins. Realists, French and English, have not always been men of the finest and gentlest instincts: Crackanthorpe is often the most drab of realists, yet we never lose consciousness of a refined and sensitive nature in the writer of these hard, dry-point sketches and tales. It is probable that they will drop further from sight as time passes; but with the few the name of Crackanthorpe will be remembered for his genius in observation and character-drawing, and for the undeviating sincerity of his work.

Henry Harland, 1861–1905.

Henry Harland, Ernest Dowson and H. D. Lowry also came under French influences in the writing of fiction, but with them these influences developed in the form of a sentimental and nervous impressionism. Harland's early life and training made him a citizen of no nation. He was an American born in St. Petersburg, and he was educated in America, Rome and Paris. His first novels dealt chiefly with American-Jewish life, and were published under the pseudonym Sidney Luska. His first book, *As it was Written: A Jewish Musician's Story* (1885), and others which succeeded it, followed the track of sensationalism. In 1890 he came to London and published under his own name *Two Women or One* (1890) and *Mea Culpa: A Woman's Last Word* (1891). But in 1893, with the publication of *Mademoiselle Miss and Other Stories*, his better style appeared, and in the following year he attained prominence when he was appointed editor of

the *Yellow Book*. *Mademoiselle Miss* contains five short tales, which first exhibit, and notably in the title-story, that charm of light and airy style, that graceful humour which are commonly associated with the name of Harland. These sketches, for they are sketches rather than tales, in their air of inconsequence often remind us of Maupassant. They lead to nothing, and their only charm is the art with which characters are hit off and environment painted with deft, quick phrases. The two best tales have a French setting. ' Mademoiselle Miss ' shows the unsophisticated little English governess flung by chance into a cheap Parisian hotel and the company of students and *étudiantes* who were " to put it squarely the most disreputable family in Europe." The other, ' The Funeral March of a Marionette,' is a sketch of the death of a vicious little *cocote*. The story reveals that vein of tender pathos which Harland possessed in addition to gifts of gaiety and wit. Of the *cocote's* funeral procession he writes :

> " To-morrow women (who would have shrunk from her in her lifetime, as from something pestilential) will reverently cross themselves, and men (who would have . . . ah, well, it is best not to remember what the men would have done) will decently bare their heads, as her poor coffin is borne through the streets on its way to the graveyard."

Harland was a master of the short sketch, not of the story ; for he was wanting in invention and his imagination was not strong. *Grey Roses* (1895), another collection of sketches, not only follows the manner and subject-matter of *Mademoiselle Miss*, it repeats incidents and sentences almost word for word. In ' The Reward of Virtue,' for example, Harland uses again, with slight transposition the incident and the words already referred to, when we are told that men bared their heads and women crossed themselves who would have spurned in life the old vagabond of the Boul' Miche. And this is not the only instance of close repetition. In these two volumes of sketches and short tales Harland is, perhaps, at his best, although it was with the pretty and sentimental love-stories of *The Cardinal's Snuff-box* (1900)

and *The Lady Paramount* (1902) that he won great popularity. These are graceful, witty and decorative, but their substance is slight and their atmosphere unreal.

Harland never attempts the large theme, his gift lies in the short story which sketches men and women in moods not too serious and graces vignettes of life with gay humour and delicate pathos. Though not ambitious his work has the charm of truth within its limitations. The pathos of 'The Reward of Virtue' and 'When I am King' is simple, unforced and wholly free from exaggeration. And in Harland we recognise the stylist, the man who can be conversant with good literature without thrusting pedantry upon us. The lightness of his wit and humour are things to take joy in. His strength lay in brief and impressionistic tales; and as an editor he was less successful. The *Yellow Book*, with the men and the material he had to his hand, ought to have been a finer periodical.

Ernest Dowson, 1867–1900.

Ernest Dowson is to be counted with the poets, but the little prose he has left behind him has, with his verse, a charm of sentiment and evanescent cynicism. The sub-title of *Dilemmas* (1895), 'Stories and Studies in Sentiment,' expresses well the nature of his poetry, and the title of the book aptly describes the prose sketches, for they are studies in cases of conscience rather than mere sentiment. Each story is a tale of loss and the irony of circumstance—a man and woman lost to each through a mistake and the treachery of a friend, a pupil lost to a master who sinks into poverty while she becomes a famous *prima donna*, forgetfulness of an early friend for the sake of fame, the mistake of a man who hoards wealth that he may be in a position to marry the woman of his heart, forgetting that both grow old and the world is changing for them. The most dramatic of these tales is 'A Case of Conscience.' Two men love one woman. One knows that he ought not to marry, though she has consented, for he has not confessed that he is a divorced man, and she, as a Roman Catholic, if she marries him and discovers his past will believe herself to be living in open sin; the other will not enlighten her lest he should seem to be actuated for the sake of

his love and not her happiness. The issue is left unsolved. The motive of these stories—life's little ironies—belongs peculiarly to Mr. Thomas Hardy, though Dowson's treatment is different and more sentimental. All have the charm of that tender melancholy which marks Dowson's poetry, and decidedly, even as stories, they are not negligible; for they have point and are well told. But the character-drawing is wanting in power of detachment. Dowson rings the changes upon one or two types he is able to understand, and the others he neglects.

Henry Dawson Lowry, 1869–1906.

Henry Dawson Lowry, was, like Dowson, a poet, and his sketches and short stories in some degree resemble the mood and temper in which *Dilemmas* was written. Lowry's first work of any note was the series of short stories, *Wreckers and Methodists* (1893), and this was soon followed by *Women's Tragedies* (1895). These two volumes contain sketches and stories of life in his native Cornwall, told with a restraint and distinction of style which mark them as work far above the average of the short tale written to meet the needs of the magazine-devouring public. They reveal a thoughtful and ordered mind, and a nature lonely and melancholy, but not morbid. In the combination of an exquisite delicacy and a reserved power 'The Man in the Room,' a story of the second volume, almost takes the breath with astonishment. His novel, *A Man of Moods* (1896), on the other hand, though distinguished by the style which never deserted Lowry, has little else to recommend it; and the child's book, *Make Believe* (1896), though beautiful in passages, is apt to drag and run heavily.

Arthur Symons, b. 1865.

Mr. Symons, with the exception of John Davidson, the most notable of the younger poets in this group, is scarcely in any wise to be counted a writer of fiction, though one volume of short stories, published late in his life, stands to his credit. *Spiritual Adventures* (1905), a book of imaginative tales and psychological studies is of interest in the element of autobiography it contains. Its first sketch, 'A Prelude to Life,' is in a form scarcely disguised the story of the development of

Mr. Symons' mind and imagination in early years. The reference is obvious when the hero of this sketch confesses that for the first five years in London he felt an unceasing delight in the mere fact of being there.

> "I had never cared greatly for the open air in the country, the real open air, because everything in the country, except the sea, bored me; but here, in the 'motley' Strand, among these hurrying people, under the smoky sky, I could walk and yet watch. If ever there was a religion of the eyes, I have devoutly practised that religion. I noted every face that passed me on the pavement."

In this confession lies the secret of the origin of half the poems in *Silhouettes* and *London Nights*.

The other sketches are of a more general character, and relate, for example, the story of a woman who becomes a great actress in a moment of passionate wrath at being displaced by a rival, and the story of a Cornish fisherman who sins the sin against the Holy Ghost for the sake of the Lord. The curious and remote in the psychology of character is the chief interest of these sketches.

Four other writers have been named who had some connection with either the *Yellow Book* or *The Savoy*, who have chiefly won fame in other fields, and yet at some period of their lives made essays in the writing of prose-fiction. In manner and style they have no relation to each other, nor is their fiction of any special merit or importance, and they may, therefore, be briefly dismissed. John Davidson, as has been noted elsewhere, wrote a few novels in early life in the hope of earning money by them; but poetry was his joy and the end of his being. *Perfervid* (1890), however, has merit as a novel, and is not to be set aside as a mere money-making venture. Mr. Max Beerbohm was one of the brightest luminaries in the constellation of the *Yellow Book;* but he is a caricaturist, an essayist and parodist. He was early distinguished as "brilliant"; he neither achieved brilliance nor had it thrust upon him. The word exactly defines 'A Defence of Cosmetics' and other essays which

John Davidson, 1857–1909.

Max Beerbohm, b. 1872.

appeared in the *Yellow Book* and elsewhere, and were afterwards republished in volume form; it describes the witty aptness of the parodies in *A Christmas Garland* (1912); and, above all, it describes his caricatures. For twenty years he has been the only caricaturist of any eminence or genius in England; for he realises that caricature must exaggerate the essential and not the inessential; and, therefore, his caricatures are criticism. His true fame will rest upon his genius as a draughtsman and caricaturist; but, at the least, he touches with brilliance anything he attempts. His novel, *Zuleika Dobson* (1911), a piece of fantastic wit and satire, came as a surprise. Mr. Edmund Gosse discovers in its pages a bergamot perfume exhaled and communicated from the pages of *John Inglesant;* but in this discovery he is, perhaps, inspired with something of the fancifulness of the narrative of which he writes. The spirit of Oxford, its truth, its charm, and its absurdity, is inimitably caught in this fantastic tale of the loves of an undergraduate duke and a popular conjurer-actress. And the ground of reality, as in the caricatures, is always there. In his novel, if novel it may be called, Mr. Max Beerbohm shows that his gift of satirical wit is with his caricature grounded in the real.

Laurence Housman, b. 1867.

Like Mr. Max Beerbohm Mr. Laurence Housman contributed both to the text and the illustrations of the *Yellow Book*, but his versatility is of another kind. In the first decade of his literary life he was not among authors popular at the lending library. His poetry was obscure, and, more distasteful to English readers, mystical; and the appeal of his prose-allegories was chiefly literary. But in 1900 he published anonymously a book which excited the dulled sensibilities of subscribers to the libraries; and for a short time *An Englishwoman's Love-letters* became the butt of parodists and the rival of the weather in conversation. Beautiful, artificial, melancholy, and even in the ecstasy of love a little morbid, these letters reflect the involvements of Mr. Housman's earnest, wistful, tearful pathos. The moods of his verse are reflected throughout in the *Englishwoman's Love-letters;* but the subscribers to the lending

libraries had not read his poetry. A passage like the following may be matched more than once or twice in his verse :

> "I wonder what, to the starving and drought-stricken, the taste of death can be like ! Do all the rivers of the world run together to the lips then and all its fruits strike suddenly to the taste when the long deprivation ceases to be a want ? Or is it simply a ceasing hunger and thirst—an antidote to it all ?"

As documents purporting to come from life these letters are too strident of mannerisms and studied phrasings, too intellectual to be the utterance of a heart-felt love. No woman could write thus unless she were thinking more of herself than the man to whom she was sending the letter. As love-letters they are self-condemned ; for they represent an emotion other than love ; the gaze is turned inward not outward. The letters of George Egerton's *Rosa Amorosa* (1901), which appeared almost simultaneously with *An Englishwoman's Love-letters*, though they attracted less attention, show greater knowledge of the heart, and are a far more successful essay in the same manner of writing. Mr. Housman's book is virtually a novel in epistolary form, for it traces narrative from the blossoming of love to the withering of hope ; and its success led Mr. Housman to fresh efforts in the field of fiction with *A Modern Antæus* (1901) and *Sabrina Warham* (1904). The legend of Antæus, slain only when deprived of the magic touch of Mother Earth, has evidently long occupied Mr. Housman's imagination, for he writes a poem on the theme in his first volume of verse ; and his first novel in direct narrative is the story of one who in our modern world lived close to the breast of Earth and drew sustenance from her. It is a long novel : its direct realism and the dramatic force of its incidents are in surprising contrast to the cryptic mysticism of his earlier work. *Sabrina Warham* (1904) is a more straggling story, and hardly so strongly or vividly written. Both these tales are set against a background of the English countryside. But Mr. Housman's genius does not readily turn to the realistic representation of everyday life, and he is more successful in sustaining interest in *John of Jingalo*

(1912) and *The Royal Runaway* (1914), whimsical yet direct and pointed satires upon things monarchical, political, religious and social in contemporary English life. Nearly all problems and activities of the day are introduced, including the cause of woman suffrage, to which Mr. Housman has so heartily given of his time, and the censorship of plays from which he has suffered. He is wanting in the acid quality of greater satirists, but the satire is purposive, and without departing far from things as they are he succeeds in throwing the life of to-day into humorous relief. Indeed, it is hard to connect these books with the author of *Green Arras* and *Spikenard*.

Bernard Shaw, b. 1856.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, widely as he differs in every other respect from Mr. Laurence Housman, has this, at least, in common with him that he is a satirist, and in early life he wrote several poor and unsuccessful satirical novels. They were refused by all publishers and struggled to life in the pages of magazines which expired soon after printing the young novelist's contributions. But these early efforts in fiction have a common characteristic, which usually belongs to the financial triumph of each year—they are not important as literature nor have they any great interest or significance. And their author is not least ready to relegate them to a position of unimportance and entitle them "Novels of My Nonage." *Immaturity* (1879) never appeared in print, but its very title for a first novel is typical of Mr. Shaw's fondness for a kind of inverted humour. *The Irrational Knot* (1880) treats the hoary problem of the marriage tie, but like a play of much later date, *Getting Married* (1908), it suffers in its greatest need from the author's inability to perceive that if woman is more primitive than man in "the sex business," this is not the conclusion of the whole matter. Woman is both more primitive and more sophisticated: her receptiveness and power of imitation have laid her open to the attacks of civilisation, and her inscrutability is a result of the social order and its arbitary conventions to which she has yielded more rapidly than man. *An Unsocial Socialist* (1883) bears the credit of having interested William Morris upon its appearance in a socialist periodical, but it carries too many traces of the pro-

pagandist in the first flush of critical interest with new theories; and the whole is exasperatingly formless. *Cashel Byron's Profession* (1882), which had a measure of success from the first both in England and America, is the best of these early novels, for it is genuine melodrama and makes no pretence of reaching after higher things. It is the only one of the novels which gives any evidence of the efficiency which the author has carefully cultivated all his life—the limits are recognised and the accomplishment adequate. Efficiency, variously disguised, and directed to different ends, has been the simple creed inspiring Mr. Shaw's work as critic, dramatist and speaker; it is the ground of his philosophy and the hope of the Fabian Society which he has unswervingly supported. As a dramatist Mr. Shaw has, at least, been efficient: his dramas sometimes fail not through inability to fulfil his intent, but from mistaken intention. The novels, save *Cashel Byron's Profession*, are inefficient; they do not fulfil their intention.

§ 4

At this stage, before passing to younger writers of fiction or the novelists who found themselves a few years later than those with whom the earlier portion of this chapter has been concerned, it will only be possible to gather into a miscellaneous section a few who have either won or deserve reputation, with the premise that no implication of relationship is intended by the conjunction of names. In the case of several similar aims or a like result may be noted; but, in general, writers here passed in rapid survey have written either to please themselves or a public which had learned to expect a definite manner from them, without reference to any theory in the art of fiction, and without an originality strong enough definitely to influence others. At the outset it will be possible to range together a few romantic and imaginative novelists and story-tellers.

Romance, in seeking an escape from the civilisation of an industrial and mechanical world, has commonly turned to wild and untrammelled corners still to be found

on the earth; and among writers of romance who draw upon travel, adventure and experience, and write with unquestionable gifts of imagination and literary style are to be named Mr. Cunninghame Graham and Mr. W. H. Hudson. Mr. Cunninghame Graham, traveller, Member of Parliament and socialist orator, began to write comparatively late in life, and it is surprising that an author so finely endowed with gifts of style and language, of youthful adventurousness, of full-blooded joy in life, should have waited so long before yielding to the impulse of self-expression. The explanation is to hand in his books, and needs no long searching. Mr. Cunninghame Graham is first a man of action, a lover of travel, and, above all, a lover of life, of the strong, rough life of men and women dwelling on wild plains, unspoiled by the mechanism of modern civilisation. And when he writes it is not for the sake of writing, but to gather what he has experienced. "Let nobody deceive himself," he writes, . . . "that books are spun out from the inner consciousness. . . . All that we write is but a bringing forth of something we have seen or heard about." To read Mr. Cunninghame Graham's sketches and short stories is to be in touch with a writer alive to the finger-tips, a man who feels not the joy of life but a plenitude of gladness in living. Practically all his work, apart from topographical books and narratives of travel, consists of sketches, studies of character and fragmentary stories that are no more than sketches. He writes of Mexico, the Pampas of South America, of Spain, of the Arabs in North Africa, of his native Scotland, of life in the untamed and savage corners of the world, of the weary, wicked life of old-world cities, and always he leaves the impression of one who intimately and as a native knows the lives and souls of all the men and women whom he has seen. *Aurora la Cujiñi* (1898), a realistic sketch of a bull fight and a dancing-hall in Seville, showed his command of words and of a style that had the romantic charm without the slightly foppish sentimentality of Stevenson. And, unlike Stevenson's, Mr. Cunninghame Graham's realism is not guess-work by a romanticist—it is observation which shrinks from nothing.

Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham, b. 1852.

Zola might have described how the short sleeves of the dancer "slip back exhibiting black tufts of hair under her arms, glued to her skin with sweat," but Stevenson would have shrunk from it. Mr. Cunninghame Graham draws characters of all types and nations with a clear eye for the essentials that matter. None can forget, after reading 'Beattock for Moffat,' the dying Scotchman travelling home in the train, or the hard-grained and much-hated missionary of 'A Convert,' or the contrast of the innocent and unsuspecting English girl and the courtesan in 'Signalled,' or, in another sketch, the life-like portrait of the disreputable Doña Ana Alvarez who kept an establishment of girls "in a winding lane." And to name these is to select only a few of the stories, sketches and character-studies which appear in *Success* (1902), *Progress* (1905), *His People* (1906), and the series not very happily named *Faith* (1909), *Hope* (1910) and *Charity* (1912). These collections all have romance, the freshness of the open air, a style, vivid, nervous, idiomatic, and an individual everyday philosophy conveyed in brief, pregnant, ironical turns of speech. Above all Mr. Cunninghame Graham is the lover of quaint and savage life. His philosophy of the past and present is summed up in *Success:*

> "The Bedouin draped in blue rags, his sandals on his feet, seated upon a hide-bound 'wind-drinker,' or perched upon a camel, with his long gun or spear in his hand, retains an air of dignity, such as might grace a king. The same man waiting at a railway station for a train, becomes a beggar. . . . So does our progress make commercial travellers of us all."

William Henry Hudson, b. 1862.

Mr. William Henry Hudson is another writer of romances and tales founded upon wild life in South America, as well as a naturalist and ornithologist who has won deserved reputation as a scientific observer. His studies as a naturalist lie outside the scope of this book, but his few romances excite a regret that he has not given himself more often to the writing of fiction. In 1902 he published *El Ombú*, a collection of short tales of adventure in South America. Among these the most striking is

the eerie and supremely well-written tragedy of 'Marta Riquelme.' Many years before this he wrote *The Purple Land that England Lost* (1885), a romance of Uruguay embodying elements of topography and history. And in 1904 came the still finer romance of wandering and love, touched with allegorical significance, *Green Mansions*, a narrative of the journeyings of a Venezuelan on the upper reaches of the Orinoco. If Mr. Hudson has given the best of his time to the study of nature and the writing of books such as *The Naturalist in La Plata* (1892), *Nature in Downland* (1900) and *A Shepherd's Life* (1910), he has, at least, shown that he possesses the gifts of a romancer. He has subtlety, tenderness, a knowledge of man as well as of beasts and birds, a love of the open air, and a clear, direct, sensitive style. His South American stories reveal not only insight and observation, but a powerful imagination. He has chosen to serve two masters, and in the twofold service he has reached a distinction gained by few who more prudently concentrate their aims.

Among other writers of romance whose work, whatever its exact chronology, is most naturally to be placed within the concluding years of the last century, six may be named. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch is, perhaps, the only living prolific writer of tales of adventure who has a wide and scholarly knowledge of the literature of his country. His anthology, the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, is the best anthology ever collected, with the exception of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*. When he was an undergraduate at Oxford the fascination of Stevenson's romanticism had not yet caught the world with its charm. *Treasure Island* did not come till 1883. But before he was fairly launched on the world of letters the magic of Stevenson's prose and his adventurous romanticism were beginning to exercise their spell, and *Dead Man's Rock* (1887), a story of the quest of the great ruby of Ceylon, has all the macabre character of the tale that delighted Stevenson. And, further, Q., to use the pen-symbol adopted by the author, was by nature born a stylist. If any man could take up the mantle of Stevenson it was he, and it was therefore fitting that he should be chosen in 1897 to

Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch, b. 1863.

complete the unfinished romance, *St. Ives*. The joy of life, the spirit of adventure, a kindly and thoroughly happy humour pervade all Q.'s romances, novels and historical tales. Among his pure romances may be counted his first book, *Dead Man's Rock*, *The Adventures of Harry Revel* (1903), and a number of volumes of short stories. In the series of historical tales are to be included *The Splendid Spur* (1889), a romance of the great Civil War, with the scene chiefly laid in the West of England, and *Fort Amity* (1904), with its scene laid in Canada during the contest for that country between England and France.

Among his more important books—those that rest finally upon the study of character—are *Troy Town* (1888), *The Ship of Stars* (1899), *The Westcotes* (1902), *Hetty Wesley* (1903), *True Tilda* (1909) and the truly delightful *Hocken and Huncken* (1912). The story in *Troy Town* resolves itself into sketches, excellent in their humour and truthfulness, describing the gentry and lesser people of Troy, or Fowey, in Cornwall. *The Ship of Stars* is the love-story of a Cornish lad, a dreamer who becomes, like many of the world's dreamers, more practical than his matter-of-fact fellows—a story lit with the poetry of dreams and ideals. *The Westcotes* hovers between the romance and the true novel, and relates the story of an English girl and a French prisoner during the great wars. *Hetty Wesley* is a fine character-study of Hetty, the sister of the evangelists John and Charles Wesley. Misunderstood at home she is sacrificed to the purposes of her brothers. In the form of the serious and realistic novel, based upon interest in human character, this is the author's most ambitious book and his finest piece of writing. *True Tilda*, however, is hardly a success, for Q. is not entirely at home in his environment of bargees, strolling actors and town dwellers. But he reasserted himself with the wonderfully good humour of *Hocken and Huncken*, the story of two old sea captains and their chequered courtship of the well-favoured and moneyed widow, Mrs. Bosenna. In this tale he returned to Troy Town and its inhabitants, people whom he cannot touch without drawing the reader to them.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has the gift of versatility.

He has written excellent parodies, stirring ballads, fine lyrics, sound criticism, tales of adventure, historical romances and novels. In none of these many forms has he written anything of outstanding importance; but he has poetry, romance, humour, a happy optimism, and the power of conveying, even in the slightest sketch, the impression of a writer imbued with fine and careful literary instincts.

Sir Henry Rider Haggard, b. 1856.

The sensational and popular tales of Sir Henry Rider Haggard have less pretensions to call for a literary judgment than the romances of Q., but the author has style and a racy vigour which raise his stories above the common rout. Some of the better qualities of these tales are due to the fact that Sir Rider Haggard combined the life of letters and the life of affairs. While yet in his teens he went out to South Africa as secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, Governor of Natal. In 1878 he was Master of the High Court of Transvaal. On his return to England he became a successful farmer and writer of sensational stories. He has also written upon farming, gardening, agricultural conditions in Denmark and other countries, Salvation Army labour colonies at home and in America; but to the majority of readers he is known as the author of exciting tales of adventure. None of these possesses long-enduring qualities; but within their range Sir Rider Haggard's books are not without their distinctive merits. *King Solomon's Mines* (1886), a tale of wild adventure in Central Africa in search of King Solomon's Ophir, first brought him fame. Its sequel, *Allan Quartermain* (1888), is an equally thrilling tale of the discovery of a hidden nation in the heart of the dark continent. After this the author ranged over many lands, Holland, Mexico, Palestine, Egypt, Scandinavia; but nearly always in the same vein, investing the incredible or improbable with an air of reality. He is, however, at his best with tales of peril and adventure in Africa, and more particularly with *Cleopatra* (1889), *Maiwa's Revenge* (1888) and *She* (1886). He has also not been unsuccessful in tales of ordinary life—as in *Jess* (1887) and *Joan Haste* (1895)—for he possesses humour and a sound knowledge of human nature.

The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould may also be counted with the writers of romances rather than as the novelist. He began to write so long since that he scarcely falls within the limits of these chapters, although the general character of his work may be mentioned briefly, for he is not only amazingly prolific and versatile, but he still continues to write with an industry and vigour that scarcely falter. For over half a century he has been writing from different country rectories upon all subjects and with unabated speed. Comparative religion, quaint, old-world customs, beliefs, superstitions, folk-lore, topography, ethnology, and by-ways of history have been among his chief interests. His first important book was *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages* (1866–67). This was succeeded by *The Origin and Development of Religious Beliefs* (1869–70), and the lengthy and laborious *Lives of the Saints* (1872–77) in fifteen volumes. He is a hymn writer, the author of many volumes of sermons, guide-books, histories and novels. Perhaps nobody living among English authors has produced a larger quantity of printed matter; but the pen of a ready writer has been a snare set in the way of Mr. Baring-Gould, for it cannot be said that he has produced one book of individual character or distinction. Only a few from the large number of his romances can be named. *Mehalah* (1880), is sensational, but it displays some power in character-drawing and imagination. *John Herring* (1883), his best character-study, is a gloomy and pessimistic tale of village life in Devon and Cornwall. And of his later romances the best are *The Broom Squire* (1896) and *Cheap Jack Zita* (1893). Mr. Baring-Gould for the most part depicts rustic and agricultural life in the West of England, but he uses almost any local setting with complete indifference. When he is at his best in *John Herring* and one or two of the other novels, his genuine gift of characterisation, his imaginative rendering of scenery and atmosphere cause regret that he has written so rapidly without due thought or care. Mr. Baring-Gould is a born man-of-letters who only lacks self-restraint, patience and distinctive ideas.

Sabine Baring-Gould, b. 1834.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, another popular writer of

romances, is the grandson of John Doyle, the caricaturist and illustrator of Thackeray. He has written many tales that are clever and ingenious; but he is little troubled with literary idealism. Although he studied medicine at Edinburgh, and even practised as a physician for eight or nine years, he began to write early. His first books were insignificant; and it was not till he introduced his famous detective character, Sherlock Holmes, in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), that he won success. With other books in which the same acute but prosy detective appears the author set the vogue of the detective tale, and popular magazines were inundated with stories in this *genre*. Ingenious complications of crime and their certain solution by the infallible Holmes is the stuff of which is woven *The Sign of Four* (1889), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1891), *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1893), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1904). The author possesses ingenuity in the invention of the mysterious, macabre and horrifying, but to compare his work with the writing of Poe, as some have not hesitated to do, is to lose all sense of proportion.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, b. 1859.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's historical romances are of better literary quality. *The White Company* (1890), a narrative of the exploits in France and Castile of a company of English bowmen during the Hundred Years' War, is a well-written and fascinating historical tale; and *Sir Nigel* (1906) is another good romance of the Middle Age. *Rodney Stone* (1896) depicts vividly and realistically prize-fighting and social amenities in England during the days of the Prince Regent. *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard* (1896) and *The Adventures of Gerard* (1903) are a racy and vivacious record in the first person of the experiences of a gallant but conceited soldier in Napoleon's Grand Army. The characters of historical romance are rarely more than puppets; yet in these and other volumes Sir Arthur Conan Doyle displays a ready aptitude for weaving a good story of adventure against a background of history.

During the Boer War Dr. Doyle visited South Africa, and returned to write a history of *The Great Boer War*

(1900) and a defence of English policy. At this time he received a knighthood. Latterly he has written several plays and new romances, including *The Lost World*, in which appears the sensational character of Professor Challenger who discovers a territory still inhabited by the fearful wild-fowl of the earth's early ages. This book is a good example of the lowest level of the author's commercial output, forming the largest part of his work. With his historical romances, however, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has shown a real faculty for producing good tales of the kind.

In fidelity to human nature and in style the Canadian romances of Sir Gilbert Parker stand on a different plane. In *Pierre and His People* (1892) and companion volumes of tales depicting half-breed and French Canadian life Sir Gilbert Parker drew on the experiences of his youth, for he was born near Ontario and learned to know the people of Lower Canada intimately. The stories collected in *Pierre* are related to each other only in that they are strung upon one character, Pierre, the half-breed. Taken together they are a painting of life in that part of Canada assigned by charter to the Hudson's Bay Company, and sketch in the spirit of romance, adventure or sentiment the characters of Indians, half-breeds, servants of the company and experiences of the North-West Mounted Police. 'A Prairie Vagabond,' the story of Little Hammer's avenging of his wife, in the exactness and economy of its material is an example of the art of the short tale. A curious defect in these tales is the absence of background. The arid wastes, the clear air, the snows of the north—these are not omitted, but Sir Gilbert Parker is far from successful in creating an atmosphere and a setting for his characters. We can almost forget our hypothetical environment as we read. Happily this charge cannot be brought with equal force against the short stories of *An Adventurer of the North* (1895), which continue the records begun in *Pierre*, and *The Lane That Had No Turning* (1900), which contains some of his best work. But best of all is the spirited and vigorous romance, *When Valmond Came to Pontiac* (1895), the story of a valet who had served in the Bona-

Sir Gilbert Parker, b. 1862.

parte family, was imbued with their traditions, came to Pontiac, a small village in French Canada, posed as a Bonaparte, and died, shot by the English soldiery, for stirring up sedition among the people. Sir Gilbert Parker achieved noteworthy success in this book. The villagers, their life, the scenery, the atmosphere are vividly painted, and humour, pathos and style all conduce to an excellent story.

Mrs. Falchion (1893) is not so convincing as the short stories or romances. It is a study of some length in the character of a hard, wire-drawn woman. The characters are needlessly translated from point to point on the globe, and the action is melodramatic. *The Seats of the Mighty* (1896) is an ambitious but well-knit and successful historical romance of Canada in the days of its conquest by Wolfe. The historical material has been worked up with scholarly care. In *The Battle of the Strong* (1898) Sir Gilbert Parker deserted Canada without advantage to the tale; and two years later he entered the English Parliament to the detriment of his work as a writer. The pursuit of an active life has to some extent forced literature aside. Among his later books, in which the scene is variously laid, are *Donovan Pasha* (1902), *The Ladder of Swords* (1904), *The Weavers* (1907), *Northern Lights* (1909) and *The Judgment House* (1913). The last named is a strikingly dramatic and idealistic novel treating the relationship of England and South Africa.

Sir Gilbert Parker's finest work is to be found in his early studies of French Canadian life, and chiefly in that truly admirable romance, written with humour and the dignity of true pathos, *When Valmond Came to Pontiac.* Valmond, the sincere imposter, is a figure of great attractiveness, Pierre, the half-breed, the *Curé*, the *Avocat*, the *Seigneur* of Pontiac, and the villagers are without exception vividly and convincingly characterised. Sir Gilbert Parker is not an inventive or creative writer, but his style is good, he is conscious of literary responsibility, his observation is sure; and, if he belongs to the secondary class of novelists, his French Canadian stories give him a high place in that class.

Hugh Stowell Scott, who used for his pen-name, Henry

Seton Merriman, was a writer of romantic tales who won great popularity and large sales; but he has little further claim to mention, for if his work never sinks far it equally never rises above a competent mediocrity. Among his best-known tales are *The Slave of the Lamp* (1892), *The Sowers* (1896) and *In Kedar's Tents* (1897).

Henry Seton Merriman, 1863–1903.

In sharp contrast with these writers of romance may be placed two writers of ethical, economic and problem novels of a realistic character. Charles Grant Blairfindie Allen, who abbreviated his name on title-pages to Grant Allen, was by the whole influence of his training as a scientific observer a realist in fiction, a keen and a close student of character. Unfortunately the necessity to earn a livelihood by the pen drove him to write many novels of a kind dictated not by his own ideals, but by the taste of the subscriber at the libraries. In fifteen years he published over thirty novels, and this rapidity in output speaks for itself. They all bear evidence to the hard, keen, brilliant intellect of the author, and many of the short stories are admirably told; but Grant Allen wrote fiction by necessity, not choice. If he had not been compelled by circumstances it is doubtful if he would have turned aside from research and scientific writing. Fortunately for himself he won success in the practice of fiction; but even his more ambitious novels have little permanent value. *The Woman Who Did* (1895), his most famous book, was a sincere and earnest plea for freer union and love between the sexes than the present order of society commonly allows; and inevitably it enjoyed, what the author did not wish, the success of a scandal. In the nature of the case it was impossible that *The Woman Who Did* should be a work of art. Its obvious didacticism, the keen but deplorably narrow vision of the author, his inability to see far on either hand, and his burning desire scientifically to cleanse a smirched and soiled world, constantly intrude themselves upon the character-painting. In common with the greater part of Grant Allen's work in fiction the book exemplifies his acute intellectual powers and lack of artistic faculty.

Grant Allen, 1848–1899.

Like Grant Allen Mr. Israel Zangwill is a man of causes as well as of letters. He is a Jew of the Jews, a promoter of the Zionist movement, latterly he has enthusiastically advocated Woman Suffrage, and written what may be described as large-scale and modern moralities in *The War God* (1911) and *The Next Religion* (1912). And, like Grant Allen, Gissing and Mr. Arthur Morison Mr. Zangwill was to be counted with a school of realists in the 'nineties, not markedly influenced by French methods. Before he resigned his position as a master at the Jews' Free School, after differences with the managers, he had written a fantastic tale, *The Premier and the Painter* (1888), in conjunction with Louis Cowen; and it was therefore natural that he should slip into journalism and authorship. He won deserved reputation with *Children of the Ghetto* (1892), an ambitious attempt to draw in comprehensive outline the Jews of London, rich and poor. Their ideas, habits of life and ceremonial, are represented in close detail and with great fullness, and a slight thread of narrative serves to bind the whole. *Children of the Ghetto* is a remarkable, interesting and valuable book. Mr. Zangwill broke new ground with this unrelentingly realistic, yet sympathetic picture of life among his countrymen in Whitechapel. He possessed knowledge founded upon close observation, abundant material, a fine power of strong characterisation, and, furthermore, lightness of touch, a vivid manner and humour combined with pathos. *Children of the Ghetto* is not, as one enthusiastic critic described it, "Heinrich Heine writing with the pen of Charles Dickens"—a startling image—though the book undoubtedly suggests Dickens, for Mr. Zangwill is able to describe sordid, ugly and poverty-stricken life without harshness. To Gissing the underworld was hateful and dirty without redemption.

Israel Zangwill, b. 1864.

Mr. Zangwill had found his field of work and followed his first success with *Ghetto Tragedies* (1893), short stories of Jewish life which were later incorporated in *They That Walk in Darkness* (1899). Jewish also are the sketches of *Ghetto Comedies* (1907). In his novels Mr. Zangwill's fault is prolixity; but his handling of the short story is often masterly. *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (1898), though

Jewish in its content, is a book of a different order, an attempt, by an adaptation of Landor's method of the imaginary conversation, to bring to life great men of the race—Spinoza, Heine, Ferdinand Lasalle and others.

If the supreme test of power in a novel is the concurrent and inevitable development of incident and character, then Mr. Zangwill reaches the top of his performance in *The Master* (1895), a non-Jewish tale. Matt Strang, the young Nova Scotian, comes to England and dreams and labours for art. He only finds himself and becomes a painter when he returns to his commonplace wife and her vulgar environment, sacrificing himself to her happiness, and devoting himself to his work. "Removed from the sapping cynicism of the Club conscience, from the drought of drawing-room disbelief, from the miasma of fashionable conversation, from the confusing cackle of critics" out of his soul was born art, "strong, austere, simple." It is a fine novel and a fine study of character.

In *The Mantle of Elijah* (1901) Mr. Zangwill again departs from Jewry to treat the politics of Palmerston's day and satirise jingoism.

Mr. Zangwill had the good fortune to appropriate to himself a field of work in fiction where the soil was virgin and untilled. Work less comprehensive, thorough and powerful would not have been without its value. Fortunately he was happy not only in his choice, but in the gifts he brought to his work. He is a prolific and facile, not a careless writer: his mind is stored with the fruits of observation and reflection on experience; and it is the very wealth of his material which leads him into his commonest fault, the overloading of his narrative. His most important book is *Children of the Ghetto*. With this he made his mark and mapped out his future course. But considered as a study in the development of a single character that very fine novel, *The Master*, must take a higher place. The theme, artistic life and the career of an artist, is hackneyed, but Mr. Zangwill's handling of the theme is powerful and original.

William Edwards Tirebuck is not wholly to be counted the writer of problem novels, although a pronounced moral purpose appears in nearly all his work, and in *Miss Grace of All Souls* he attacks the economic question of

the relationship of capital and labour. Tirebuck was born in humble circumstances and early left school to serve as errand boy or clerk in a number of Liverpool offices, for he was ever a rolling stone. His mind gradually turned to literature, and with the help of a friend, who supplied the money, he set up a "critical and satirical" paper in his native city without a vestige of literary experience or training. The result may be guessed. But he persevered and in time won the offer of a position on the staff of the *Yorkshire Post*. At this time he published *Dorrie* (1891), a picture of the poorer life of Liverpool, the only city he knew well. Regular work and office hours sat ill with his wandering disposition, and after some years he retired from the *Yorkshire Post* to live frugally in a small cottage in Scotland and write tales—*Sweetheart Gwen* (1893), *Miss Grace of All Souls* (1895), *The Little Widow* (1894); a collection of short stories, *Tales from the Welsh Hills* (1896), *Meg of the Scarlet Foot* (1898), *The White Woman* (1899) and the posthumously published *'Twixt God and Mammon* (1903).

William Edwards Tirebuck, 1854–1900.

Not long before his death Tirebuck conceived the ambition of becoming the novelist of Wales. He left Scotland to settle in the principality, where time was not allowed him fully to attempt the realisation of his ideal. In his life Tirebuck won little success, though recognition was coming to him before the end, and he received the admiring tributes of critics so far removed from each other as Tolstoy and Andrew Lang. The shortcoming of all his work is the impression it leaves of the writer who never realised himself for the want of a better mental training in early life. Each book is disorderly; he has no art of construction and pours into the tale more than is necessary. His prose, like his small volume of verse, is in want of revision. Imagination, humour, strength he had, but these gifts he could only bring into play spasmodically. Much of his work is disappointing; yet *Dorrie*, *Meg of the Scarlet Foot* and *Miss Grace of All Souls* are books far out of the common, as they are also much above the level of Tirebuck's other volumes.

§ 5

In an age when printing is cheap the supply of prose-fiction is never likely to fall short of the demand, especially if the majority of readers have little care for art and ask only to be entertained in the passing hour. The trick of stringing together in a plausible manner thrilling or laughable incidents is evidently for many not difficult to learn, and, as the rewards for success in this trick are larger than the prizes for good writing, the number of trained and competent society entertainers tends to increase yearly. The commercial novel and the purely humorous tale have their place in the social economy like everything else, and the purveyor of saleable fiction has no need to look askance at his own work, if his intention be merely to entertain and he be free from illusions and idle pretensions. His lot only is unfortunate when he takes himself seriously, or when, again, he is unable to decide whether to regard himself as an artist or a vendor of marketable goods. These points are no concern of the reader or the critic; and it is proposed, for purposes of completeness, to name in this note some popular writers of the older generation.

David Christie Murray, 1847–1907.

David Christie Murray expressed it as his opinion that the novelist was a variety of the genus entertainer, his practice agreed thereto, and his work shows no reason why it should not be taken upon his own valuation. Before becoming a novelist he was on the staff of various dailies and served as a war-correspondent to *The Times*. His first novels appeared thirty years before the time of his death well within the limits of the twentieth century, and the number of his tales is large. Among his most popular books were *A Life's Atonement* (1880), the story of a young man who by accident is guilty of a murder and thereafter devotes his life to atoning for his misdeed. Others are *Bob Martin's Little Girl* (1892), *Verona's Father* (1903), a sketch of a rascally father with two daughters who will believe nothing against him, and *The Brangwyn Mystery* (1906). These and other tales are inoffensive

and not uninteresting, but they are without any literary merit.

Hall Caine, b. 1853.

Greater far than the popularity of David Christie Murray has been the vogue of Mr. Hall Caine, who, since the reviewers have failed to satisfy his expectations, has named the great public his critic and judge. At one time few writers could rival the demand made for his books at the lending library; and, despite his ugly style, his sensationalism and his superficial treatment of character, faults which the tyro can discover, it may be admitted that he deserves some recognition for a kind of crude strength and forcible dramatic instinct. And, though on occasion he does not disdain the prophet's mantle, he is free from Miss Corelli's hysterical *ex cathedrâ* dogmatism.

Mr. Hall Caine was both unfortunate and fortunate in the associations of his early life. His birthplace, Runcorn, is hardly fitted to excite the genius of romance in the most happily gifted mind; but he was soon removed to the Isle of Man, a place which supplies the background to several of his tales. He was trained as an architect, and for several years practised his profession and followed journalism in Liverpool. Later he came to London on the invitation of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and lived with him for a short period, at the same time writing for the *Athenæum*, *Academy* and other literary papers. He practised verse, edited an anthology of sonnets, and in 1881 published his *Recollections of Rossetti*. When he turned to fiction he almost immediately achieved a phenomenal popularity with two sensational romances of Cumberland, *The Shadow of a Crime* (1885) and *A Son of Hagar* (1887). Murder, bitter villainy and base intrigue play their several parts in shaping two exciting tales. But his first story of the Isle of Man, his chosen place of residence, easily outdistances these in dramatic thrills and horrors. In *The Bondman* (1890) earthquakes and violent disturbances of nature conspire to assist a tale of blood and revenge in the days of long ago, when battles were fought with Norway. *The Deemster* (1887), a story of the Isle of Man in the eighteenth century, and *The Manxman* (1894) are nearer to everyday reality. The latter tale, a variation of the common theme, two friends and

one woman, is not without passages of true characterisation and tense dramatic situation. The novels which follow differ little from the earlier save in theme and setting. *The Christian* (1897) places a passionate love-story against a background of religious life in modern London. *The Eternal City* (1901) carries us through a phantasmagoria of high-pitched scenes of passion and sentiment, grouped about the moral and religious life of Rome, to a glimpse of the future and a religion founded upon the Lord's Prayer. *The Prodigal Son* (1904) is a modern and Icelandic version of an old, old story; and *The Woman Thou Gavest Me* (1913) is an elaborate and ingeniously complicated novel of the sex problem.

Mr. Hall Caine's novels have all the elements of excellent melodrama, and several he has adapted successfully to the stage. He has imagination and crude power; but nearly all his work is exaggerated, sensational or pretentious, and it has little relationship to any credible conditions of human life. His skill in weaving the entanglements of a complicated plot excites our admiration; but this and a certain dramatic gift combined with thoroughness in the "getting-up" of his local colour are not virtues which overweigh pages of false sentiment, rhetoric and sensationalism.

Frank Frankfort Moore, b. 1855.

Mr. Frankfort Moore has been for over thirty years a prolific writer of society novels. These are often, as, for example, *According to Plato* (1901) or *I Forbid the Banns* (1893), purely extravagant, fantastic or satirical. But Mr. Moore has studied life and manners in the eighteenth century, and in two novels, at least, he has produced work of a better order than his average. These are *The Jessamy Bride* (1897), which introduces Goldsmith, Dr. Johnson, Burke and Garrick, and *A Nest of Linnets* (1901) in which the story of Sheridan and Elizabeth Linley is admirably reconstructed.

Where the writers are many and the margin of choice not wide it is difficult to select or exclude; but three more popular novelists may be named in this section and three humorous writers.

Mr. E. F. Benson has disclaimed the book with which he won popularity. Nevertheless *Dodo* (1893) almost set a new standard of light and easy narrative, built upon

trifling dialogue, intended only to fill the hour of the idle reader. Among the author's later books have been *The Babe, B.A.* (1897), *Mammon and Company* (1900), *The Challoners* (1904) and *Dodo the Second* (1914). Mr. Benson knows the social world, he can portray its foibles and thin conventions with effective satire; but his aims are not high, his gift of characterisation is not strong and in the matter of style he is a deplorably careless writer. Mr. Morley Roberts is an accepted and long-tried writer of fiction, whose work is of another and better order. An early knowledge of Australia has been of value to him in the setting of several of his tales. *The Western Avernus* (1887), *King Billy of Ballarat* (1891) and *The Descent of the Duchess* (1900) may be named as specimens out of the large number of novels he has produced. The total bulk of his work is large, and the quality, in consequence, is not always consistent. Sometimes Mr. Roberts is betrayed into writing as the practised compiler of tales; but he has also, beyond a knowledge of his craft, sincere intention and a consciousness of life's larger implications.

Edward Frederick Benson, b. 1867.

Morley Roberts, b. 1857.

Among the older humorists who continue to write Mr. Thomas Anstey Guthrie, who uses the pen-name "F. Anstey," should, for the excellence of his burlesques, extravaganzas, parodies and comic tales, not be left without mention. He has contributed largely to *Punch*, and many of the papers which first appeared there have since been reprinted in book-form. As early as his undergraduate days he published several short stories; his first book, *Vice Versâ: A Lesson for Fathers* (1882), enjoyed a great popularity and was subsequently dramatised. The foundation of the story, an exchange of personality between a schoolboy and his father, makes no pretence to be other than the extravagant basis of comic possibilities; and F. Anstey's other tales belong to the same family of burlesque, farce and fantasy. *The Giant's Robe* (1884) has an element of the real in the remorse of the young man who poses as the author of a comedy sent him by a

F. Anstey, b. 1856.

friend, but the chief purpose of the book is entertainment. Among his other fantasies are *The Tinted Venus* (1885) and *The Brass Bottle* (1900), the latter a grown-up fairy-tale relating the escapades of a genie who escapes from a brass bottle and overloads his liberator with a series of astounding and exasperating miracles. *A Fallen Idol* (1886) is a satire upon the passing phase of popularity which esoteric Buddhism once enjoyed in this country. F. Anstey has also written admirable parodies of Ibsen and other notabilities of the day. In his own peculiar field of work he stands well above his contemporaries in raciness, vigour and grotesque imagination.

Jerome Klapka Jerome, b. 1859.

Doubtless Mr. Jerome K. Jerome would prefer to be regarded as a serious dramatist who has a message to deliver. But he is chiefly known to the many as the author of *Three Men in a Boat* (1889), a book which is humorous without being witty, and suffers only by the protraction of each humorous incident. *Three Men on the Bummell* (1900) follows the same pattern, save that the scene is transferred from the Thames to travel on the Continent. The most readable of his other volumes are his collections of light topical essays, beginning with the *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* (1886) and continuing with *The Second Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* (1898) and *Idle Ideas* (1905). More serious and ambitious is the semi-autobiographical study of the hero's experiences as a child, a youth, an actor, a journalist, contained in *Paul Kelver* (1902). As a serious dramatist and novelist Mr. Jerome is a little wanting in substance: as a humorist he is good without being ready or spontaneous. His humour would often be better could he resist the temptation to drag it to the length of its tether.

William Wymark Jacobs, b. 1863.

The humour of Mr. W. W. Jacobs' sketches and short stories of seamen ashore and afloat is, by contrast, delightfully easy and natural. His fertility in the invention of absurd situations is surprising, his dialogue is unforced and has all the ring of truth, and his seafaring characters, though their chief end is to support a ridiculous involvement of circumstances,

are far from being puppets. He began to write comparatively late, after many years of service in the savings bank department of the post office; but *Many Cargoes* (1896) brought him instant reputation, and three years later he left the civil service to embrace authorship. His first success he followed up with *The Skipper's Wooing* (1897), *Light Freights* (1901), *The Lady of the Barge* (1902) and other books. Few writers can practise humour consistently with safety: of Mr. Jacobs it may be said that he is only wearisome when he attempts to write in other veins than the humorous.

§ 6

SCOTCH NOVELISTS

Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850–1894.

In another chapter it has been pointed out that the Gael of Scotland has not, in recent years, inspired a body of literature commensurable with the work of writers who are grouped about the Celtic Revival in Ireland. Stevenson and George Macdonald belong to a passage in literary history which antedates this book. And Stevenson was an essayist, a wise and tender moralist, a romancer, a stylist, perhaps a stylist above all, believing that "life was hard enough for poor mortals without having it indefinitely embittered for them by bad art." With the Celtic spirit in its mystical aspects he showed little or no sympathy. The verse epitaph he composed for himself breathes no esoteric spiritual hope; and of death he can write in the temper of the stoic: "The sods cover us, and the worm that never dies, the conscience sleeps well at the last; these are the wages besides what we receive so lavishly day by day." Stevenson was a Scot of the Scots; his finest work depicts the history and life of his land; he knew best the Lowland folk, not the Gaels of the Western Isles. His tales in Scotch dialect are among the best that have ever been written; but his sympathy with life is the strong human sympathy of Scott; the Celtic twilight never visits his pages.

With Macdonald it was otherwise, yet not wholly. He was first a minister of religion, and, though the suspicion of heterodoxy compelled him to resign his ministry, he remained to the end a profoundly religious man. His faith was not the austere Calvinism of his land, but a deep-founded mysticism. This mystical element of his personality found expression in *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895). It was not, however, in these, but in his studies of Scotch life and character, especially in Aberdeenshire, that Macdonald gave evidence of his true measure as a writer. The first of these was *David Elginbrod* (1863); it was followed, among others, by *Robert Falconer* (1868), the best of his books, *Malcolm* (1875) and *The Marquis of Lossie* (1877). Despite faults of clumsy construction and the intrusive moral purpose of these tales they are, with those of Stevenson, the best and strongest representation of Scotch character since the time of Scott and Galt.

George Macdonald, 1824–1905.

William Black can only be named at a distance from Stevenson and Macdonald. In his day he earned a reputation beyond his merits, and he is now rapidly being forgotten. He could be romantic, sentimental, pretty, humorous, without depth or strength; and even in his best book, *A Daughter of Heth* (1871), he will not bear comparison with greater delineators of Scotch character.

William Black, 1841–1898.

When we come to later years one writer, William Sharp, offers a striking exception to the statement that the mysticism of the Gael in Scotland has found little or no reflection in modern literature. The dramatic fantasies of *Vistas* (1894) were published under his own name, but these were the prelude to *Pharais: A Romance of the Isles* (1894), *The Mountain Lovers* (1895), *The Sin-eater* (1895) and other volumes of visionary and mystical tales written under the name of Fiona Macleod. These were wrought from "the heritance of the Gael," defined in Sharp's words as "the Beauty of the World, the Pathos of Life, the gloom, the fatalism, the spiritual glamour." A poetic vision, a consciousness of the mystical beauty of the universe, an extraordinary faculty for absorbing

Fiona Macleod, 1855–1905.

and recreating Gaelic myth and superstition, are enhanced by a singularly beautiful style, which occasionally is betrayed into insincere preciosity. The style of Fiona Macleod is to be compared to that of Pater, Lafcadio Hearn, and one or two other writers of the last century. With them style is much more than a logical and grammatical use of language in sentences modulated to please the ear. Each word has personality, and every phrase an intimate and psychical relationship in cadence with the thought expressed or picture painted. Sharp possessed a curious faculty for creating an atmosphere of the mystical and weird; and the eerie magic of his scene painting communicates itself not the less because we are often conscious of rhetorical effort. A few sentences from *Pharais* will illustrate Sharp's descriptive rhetoric:

> "The immense semicircle of the sky domed sea and land with infinity. In the vast space the stars and planets fulfilled their ordered plan. Star by star, planet by planet, sun by sun, universe by universe moved jocund in the march of eternal death.
>
> "Beyond the two lonely figures, seaward, the moon swung, green-gold at the heart with circumambient flame of pearl."

This is beautiful in its degree and kind, but artificial; and Fiona Macleod cannot be read for long without an experience of satiety. Poetry, tenderness, pathos, beauty and the glamour of spiritual mysticism these stories possess, but in substance they are thin; and the consciousness of a manner deliberately adopted and artificially sustained is never wholly obscured. Nor do these tales create character; the personalities introduced belong to an other-worldly realm of the spiritual, not to this earth.

Sharp abandoned the world of drab realities for a region of mystic romance set in an environment of Gaelic folklore and myth; and, although he has been followed by lesser imitators, he can scarcely be said to have had a true successor. The Celtic Revival has borne its fruit almost wholly in Ireland. Nevertheless Mr. Neil Munro was strongly under the influence of Celtic romance when he wrote his first volume, *The Lost Pibroch* (1896). These

Neil Munro, b. 1864.

stories and sketches are not without a sense of style and they exhibit imaginative power. The style is, however, derivative, reminiscent alternately of Stevenson and Fiona Macleod; and it often becomes wearisome in its ostentatious use of archaic words—"glunch," "mort-cloth," "quaich"—for the sake of archaism. Mr. Munro's Celtic idylls are far from commonplace, they have poetry and beauty, but they are an experiment, a pose, an adventure in the art of writing. The majority of his later books are historical romances. Stevenson's *Kidnapped* could not have been far from his mind when he wrote that fine tale, *John Splendid* (1898), a story of Inverary and the Argyllshire Highlands in 1645. The hero is a character of the same type as Alan Breck; and the author uses his historical and archæological knowledge fully with the ease of Stevenson. Other romances, *Gilian the Dreamer* (1899), *The Shoes of Fortune* (1901), *Children of the Tempest* (1903) and *The New Road* (1914) further illustrate his knowledge of the people of the Western Highlands and his poetical and imaginative power.

Mr. Neil Munro is in the succession of Stevenson; other novelists of Scotland whose work calls for notice belong to the following in fiction derisively stigmatised by Henley as the "Kailyard School"; and as leader of the school stands Sir James Barrie. Scott, Galt, Macdonald, Stevenson, Mr. Munro, are, broadly speaking, objective, simple, historical; poetry, romance, imagination colour their pictures of Scotch life and character; the dialect is used naturally, and it is not an end in itself. Sentimentality, pawky humour and the liberal use of dialect for its own sake are the ordinary ingredients of the kailyard novel. The form has enjoyed its period of short-lived popularity, which is already on the decline. The sentiment and the quaint unfamiliarity of the dialect attracted readers; but the "Kailyard School" has produced no work commensurable with the earlier, the simpler and the stronger delineations of Scotch life. This statement is not invalidated even if account be taken of the graceful humour, the tender pathos of Sir James Barrie's studies and tales.

Latterly Sir James Barrie has been better known as a writer for the stage, but his work as a dramatist belongs

to another chapter, and it was with fiction that he won fame. He began by earning his livelihood as a journalist, and the earlier books are largely made of periodical articles and sketches carefully revised and deftly welded together. In 1883 he was a leader writer on the *Nottingham Journal*, but in the following year he joined the staff of the *St. James's Gazette*, and his *Auld Licht Idylls*, *A Window in Thrums* and *My Lady Nicotine* appeared in that paper. He was soon writing for other periodicals including the *British Weekly* and Henley's *National Observer*. His first book, *Better Dead*, a short extravaganza, appeared in 1887. It relates the adventures in London of a young Scotchman who joins a society which exists for the purpose of disencumbering the earth of spurious existences, in other words of assassinating those who are weary of life. To adopt an old criticism, it would have been better for this burlesque had it been more angry or more witty. As a piece of pure jocularity it grows tiresome, for the jesting is heavy-handed; and Stevenson's *Suicide Club* suggests a comparison in the same *genre* not altogether to the advantage of Sir James Barrie's early tale. Nor had he found himself in *When a Man's Single* (1888), which is no more than a collection of episodical sketches tagged together and given the form of a book; although the dry wit and humour characteristic of his later work here appear. It was, however, in the purely Scotch books that Sir James Barrie was most successful: he has hardly since surpassed the early *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) and *A Window in Thrums* (1889). They are both volumes of detached stories and sketches. The quiet humour, subdued realism, quaintness and sentimentality in dialogue and situation which characterise these sketches also lend all that is best to the later Scotch tales, *The Little Minister* (1891), *An Auld Licht Manse* (1893), *Margaret Ogilvy* (1896), *Sentimental Tommy* (1896) and its continuation, *Tommy and Grizel* (1900).

Sir James Matthew Barrie, b. 1860.

In *Auld Licht Idylls* the author sketched in a spirit of kindly and sympathetic satire the Auld Lichts, one of the straitest and most primitive in faith and theology of the Scotch sects, for whom "there were three degrees of damnation—auld kirk, play-acting, chapel." Their kirk

was chiefly supported by folk of the stamp of the old woman whose only "case against the minister was that he did not call sufficiently often to denounce her for her sins, her pleasure being to hear him bewailing her on his knees as one who was probably past praying for." *A Window in Thrums* follows the pattern of its predecessor; it is a collection of studies, not a novel. Jess, the old cripple woman, sits in a window and watches with untiring interest all the minute goings-on of life in Thrums. Kirriemuir, under the name of Thrums, has become as well known on the map of literature as Cranford or Casterbridge. But the background of landscape and scenery is often curiously slight. Thrums is never as vivid to the eye of the imagination as Mr. Hardy's Dorchester in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Sir James Barrie is interested with his little village folk, and he is content to supply no more than a background that is sufficiently clear and definite in outline to frame his characters or throw them into relief. The opening chapter of *Auld Licht Idylls* is one of the few exceptions to this statement, and an exception which can only make us regret that the author has not more often written descriptively.

> "The ghostlike hills that pen in the glen have ceased to echo to the sharp crack of the sportsman's gun (so clear in the frosty air as to be a warning to every rabbit and partridge in the valley); and only giant Catlaw shows here and there a black ridge, rearing its head at the entrance of the glen and struggling ineffectually to cast off his shroud. Most wintry sign of all, I think as I close the window hastily, is the open farm stile, its poles lying embedded in the snow where they were last flung by Waster Lunny's herd. Through the still air comes from a distance a vibration as of a tuning-fork: a robin, perhaps, alighting on the wire of a broken fence."

Human nature is, however, the chief matter of these tales which may be counted a reflex of the sentimentalism underlying the dourness of the Scotch character. The strong vein of sentiment is probably hidden in nearly all Scotch folk, but in the older novelists of Scotland it is held in restraint. Henry Mackenzie, the Edinburgh novelist of early date, may be counted with the senti-

mentalists, but Mackenzie was almost avowedly a disciple of Sterne and no very distinctive reflection of the Scotch character. Sir James Barrie's work, save in the early experiments, the isolated *My Lady Nicotine* (1890) and the later Peter Pan fairy books, is wholly an outcome of kindly and sympathetic study of Scotch country folk. None of these tales reveals any depth in the knowledge of human character nor any strong sincerity in touching upon the greater themes of life and death. Health, sweetness and an unrivalled charm in sentiment are not sufficient to confer a long life on any writing. Something more is wanted. Even that most beautiful study, *Margaret Ogilvy*, is not without its sentimental lapses of taste, and in the popular *Little Minister* and far better *Window in Thrums* there is an absence of that deeper sincerity without which any reading of life must be thin and easily frayed through. The pathos of these tales is often little more than an ornamental frill to the drab of everyday reality. Sir James Barrie's sunshine is never intense, and the chill of his shadow is tempered. Stevenson was no great philosopher, but it needs only to compare Sir James Barrie's tales with Stevenson's *causerie*, with his later books, *Ebb-tide* and *Weir of Hermiston*, to realise the great gulf fixed between the two writers. Stevenson felt what Synge knew as the joy and reality of life as the author of *A Window in Thrums* has never felt it.

It is not for the southron to dispute the use of dialect in these "Kailyard" tales, although it has been called in question by critics on both sides of the border. To the Englishman, who may be no judge, it is not as convincing as the virile and simple tongue of Scott, Burns and Stevenson, whose speech rings true of man speaking to man. Sir James Barrie's Scotch often sounds as tortured and extraordinary as the Irish of Miss Jane Barlow's peasantry. If true use of dialect be, however, a virtue in a writer, a slight exaggeration is not a matter of great moment, and Sir James Barrie has the genius of more excellent things—a knowledge true if not deep of unsophisticated human nature, of pathos and humour in common lives; and he has further a wit that comes not rarely and always justly. In these gifts none of the "Kailyard School" can rival him.

John Watson, after reaching an assured position as a popular preacher, turned his leisure hours to account by attempting to create another Thrums by the name of Drumtochty. Under the pseudonym "Ian Maclaren" he wrote two pleasant and readable, but not very convincing books, *Beside the Bonny Brier Bush* (1894) and *The Days of Auld Lang Syne* (1895), in which the judicious infusion of sentimentality brought the writer even greater fame than his sermons. These, his most popular excursions into fiction, were followed by tales written in a similar manner.

Ian Maclaren, 1850–1907.

S. R. Crockett was another novelist of the "Kailyard School," who, like "Ian Maclaren," studied life in his early years from a manse. But after the popular success of *The Stickit Minister* (1893) he retired from the ministry to take up authorship. He was a rapid writer, the list of his tales ran to the number of fifty in a little over twenty years of writing, and it is scarcely possible to name or characterise them. *Cleg Kelly* (1896) is one of the best of his representations of everyday Scotch life. Some of his books are historical romances, others are of the kailyard type; but in no case is his work of a distinctive or important character.

Samuel Rutherford Crockett, 1860–1914.

A very different and far more powerful writer was George Douglas Brown who died too early to carry out the promise of his *House with the Green Shutters* (1901). In opposition to the prevailing sentimentality of the "Kailyard School" he was a deliberate and uncompromising realist. The crudeness of passages in *The House with the Green Shutters* is therefore in part attributable to its polemic intention, the author's hostility to the popular sentimental idealisation of Scotch life. Nevertheless, though the work of a young, inexperienced and somewhat angry young man, this is a book which, in its force and originality, emerges into a distinctive position. The early death of "George Douglas" was a serious loss to Scotch fiction.

George Douglas, 1869–1902.

It will, further, be most natural to speak here of the work of the two Findlater sisters, who have done their

best writing when depicting Scottish life, though not in the manner of the "Kailyard School," to which they do not belong. The kailyard tale is a picture of the peasantry or the common people; the Misses Findlater write of genteel and middle-class life in Scottish town and village. Their earlier books have, for the most part, been written separately, but in later years they have generally worked in collaboration. Miss Jane Helen Findlater's first novel, *The Green Graves of Balgowrie* (1896), is neither in subject or setting a very remarkable story. It relates the tragic end of two sisters dwelling in a lonely house with a mother whose eccentricities gradually develop into insanity. *A Daughter of Strife* (1897), a romance of love and a tragedy of betrayal in eighteenth-century London, is better and more strongly written. In skilful construction, in sincerity of expression and in intensity Miss J. H. Findlater's second novel shows a great advance in power. Admirable for the same qualities and far superior in character-study is *The Ladder to the Stars* (1904), a novel which takes its name from a well-known picture by William Blake. The character of Miriam, the young girl who comes up to London from the provinces to seek culture and pursue literature, is cleverly drawn.

Jane Helen Findlater, b. 1866.

Miss Mary Findlater's novels are a little quieter and less ambitious in theme, but not less successful within their sphere. *Over the Hills* (1897) is a simple story of homely Scottish villagers. *Betty Musgrave* (1898) and *The Rose of Joy* (1903) are tales of upper middle-class life in Scotland. In *A Narrow Way* (1901) the emancipation of a young girl from confined domestic circumstances is sympathetically drawn.

Mary Findlater, b. 1865.

Among the books written in collaboration may be named in particular *Tales that are Told* (1901), a collection of short stories, *Crossriggs* (1908) and *Penny Moneypenny* (1911), two cleverly written studies of Scottish life and character. The work of the Findlater sisters is not remarkable, nor does it present any distinctive power or originality; but it has no faults melodramatic or sentimental; it is simple, truthful, sincere.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTEMPORARY NOVEL

H. G. Wells—Arnold Bennett—John Galsworthy—Eden Phillpotts—'John Trevenna'—Gilbert Cannan—E. M. Forster—William de Morgan—The Cockney Dialect Novel: Arthur Morrison, Somerset Maugham, Barry Pain, Pett Ridge—E. Temple Thurston, Hugh Walpole, Compton Mackenzie, Oliver Onions—Joseph Conrad—F. T. Bullen—John Masefield—Robert Hichens—Maurice Hewlett—Sir Henry Newbolt—R. H. Benson—'Anthony Hope'—W. J. Locke—Alfred Ollivant—G. S. Street—Hilaire Belloc—G. K. Chesterton—'Saki'—E. V. Lucas—Stephen Gwynn—'G. A. Birmingham'—Canon Sheehan—James Stephens.

WHERE one was writing fiction in the spacious and leisurely three volume days a hundred now dash off the eighty thousand words needful to the filling out of the six shilling novel, and the making of books calls for no more than a few hours snatched at random from a working or an idly busy life. The impetuous torrent of printed matter, against which Goldsmith protested one hundred and fifty years since, has become a wide and unbanked river. If the flood cannot now be checked, if the tide is broad, aimlessly swirling, and therefore, regarded as a whole, uninteresting, in its higher reaches it has creeks and side-waters which have beauty and a recognisable character. The vast number of novels printed year by year, the huge army of those engaged in the work of writing, make it impossible to treat the latest fiction in a satisfactory manner. A few names, without cavil more important than others, doubtless appear; but beneath these and in the ranks it is difficult to pick out individuals from the great company. In many of its paragraphs the present chapter cannot claim to be a complete or comprehensive survey of the more important among writers in the field. Each reader will have cause of complaint that this or the other novelist is omitted; and often his vexation will not be without reason. But probably the

majority will agree that novelists included in this chapter may fairly claim their place, and that, taken together with the chapter on women novelists, it affords a fairly representative survey of prose-fiction as it is being written in this country to-day.

Despite the fact that some part of modern fiction has for us a note of novelty and originality, in that it answers more peculiarly to the thoughts and hopes of a living generation of men, it cannot be said that the twentieth century has seen the birth of a fashion or development that is wholly new. The older kinds, realism, romance, fantasy, the psychological study, the historical tale, the dialect story, the provincial sketch, the didactic treatise are all here as they have been for any time in a hundred years or more. They are dressed out in modern guise and tricked with the latest turns of speech; but nothing essential has been changed. Possibly the collapse of romance into enervating subjectivism may be noted as a growth that is strange. But it is strange only in contrast with the method of the older writers of romance, Defoe, Scott, Ainsworth, Lytton, Marryat. The seed of the change is to be found in Stevenson, who took himself with some seriousness as a psychologist and student of the subjective as well as a writer of romance. *Ebb-tide* and *Weir of Hermiston* are indications of the change. The modern romancer, Mr. Hewlett or Mr. Conrad, is incapable of the objective and spectacular outlook of earlier workers in the field. Defoe, Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith and even Sterne painted men and manners with the detachment of the onlooker who is interested and concerned, but never loses sense of his personal identity. The Spectator of the famous Essays which inaugurated the eighteenth-century novel was typical of the mind of the period. We are, however, no longer spectators *ab extra*, but grinders of axes, teachers of doctrines, analysts of the mind and documentary scientists. The spectacular and adventurous romance has fallen upon its dotage and become bewilderingly garrulous: it has no longer the old power and self-sufficiency. Dickens introduced the pathetic fallacy into the romance of the London streets; and it has now attacked a large part of romance writing, even the professedly historical romance.

The painting of men and manners in great and moving scene belongs to the world's lost arts.

Among living writers those who are to be classed with the realists have undoubtedly produced more work that is likely to endure. Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. George Moore, Henry James, Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Arnold Bennett immediately come to mind, and against these, of writers to whom the word romantic seems applicable, can only be placed Mr. Hewlett, Mr. Conrad and Mr. Robert Hichens, in an equally random selection. The weight in the scales, few will deny, is with the former group. And, as is inevitable, the realists write with greater detachment. Several, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. H. G. Wells and Mr. Gilbert Cannan are often as much proverbial philosophers or denunciatory prophets as disinterested students of life; others, Mr. Arnold Bennett and Mr. Eden Phillpotts, are well content to draw the things that are; and if they weave any doctrine or philosophy into their tale it is with no instinct of the proselytiser.

To attempt an estimate of the ultimate value of contemporary work in fiction would be an act of presumptuous arrogance. The judgment of the years often confounds contemporary 'opinionettes,' but not necessarily nor always. Shakespeare received plaudits critical and popular in his day. The part has been preserved to us; and there is no reason to suppose that the larger part which has been lost was not more hearty and ungrudging. At least a few of the writers whom it seems natural for a contemporary to catalogue here will find their place in any twenty-first century history of English literature which pretends to minuteness and comprehension.

Two of the most popular writers of the day, born and educated in drab and middle-class surroundings, nourished upon ideas which satisfy the vast majority of dwellers in those forests of red-brick streets which enclose like a hedge our industrial cities, owe their first rise in favour to a gift of imagination, whimsical, original, sensational, carrying them into regions of romance and melodrama as far removed from their early surroundings as may well be conceived. The early "fantasias" of Mr. Arnold Bennett and the scientific romances of Mr. H. G. Wells may be accounted an example of reaction against environ-

ment. And in their more serious fictitious writing, in which either attempts to recover and render faithfully the scenes of boyhood and youth, the element of reaction is not absent. Mr. Bennet is far from unsympathetic to the narrow life with interests confined to the shop in the week and chapel-going on Sundays, but his retrospect is not without the irony of the man emancipated from surroundings once his natural and accepted world. And Mr. Wells's young man, whether Kipps or another, who climbs or is thrust into a larger world, is but the author pictured under differing possibilities of experience not widely diverse from his own. In Mr. Wells's retrospective sketches there is a larger vein of satire than Mr. Bennett cares to use.

H. G. Wells, b. 1866.

Both won general popularity with books other in character to their serious work. Mr. Bennett, after imitating the French realists, turned to the manufacture of the commercial novel before giving himself to the writing of those tales of the Five Towns in which he held a field to himself. In the case of Mr. Wells we cannot in like manner divide between what is and what is not his serious work. In a number of his books Mr. Bennett makes no profession to be other than a vendor of undiluted sensationalism. But the scientific romances of Mr. Wells, if they often have little to do with actual life, are, at least, more than frolics. They sometimes reflect the probable, and they often contain good and vivid character-drawing. They are not, like the tales of Jules Verne, light entertainments without corroborative detail; for Mr. Wells comes with an equipment of scientific knowledge. And the people of these romances are better than mere puppets upon whom a tale is hung; they move quickly and talk with a colloquial readiness which shows them to be patterned upon men in the streets, lecture rooms and laboratories. For Mr. Wells has left no stone of his early experience unturned. Everything has gone into the melting-pot and been fused into the material of his vivacious yet substantial stories.

Mr. Wells began life in humble circumstances; the environment of lower middle class and shop life was his native country. But he was possessed of energy, ability

and enthusiasm. At the Royal College of Science he acquired knowledge which he was soon to put to good use in other than an academic direction. In 1888 he graduated with a first class as a B.Sc. of the University of London. At first, when thrown upon his resources, he earned his living as a schoolmaster and a private coach. In 1893 he began to make excursions into journalism, writing for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Saturday Review* and *Nature*. The success of his scientific fantasy, *The Time Machine* (1895), led him definitely to abandon teaching and journalism for the writing of romances which could entertain the idle without exciting a moment of serious thought, while others could read in them Mr. Wells's advocacy of his opinions in social, political, economic and scientific theory.

His work as a writer of books falls into three divisions —the scientific romances, the sociological treatises and his realistic novels. Mr. Wells was early a member of the Fabian Society, and imbibed working ideas from Mr. Sidney Webb, Mr. Bernard Shaw and other members. But in time he found the tenets of the sect too narrow: he disavowed them directly and satirised them in autobiographical passages of his novels. In *Anticipations* (1901), *Mankind in the Making* (1903), *A Modern Utopia* (1905), *New Worlds for Old* (1908) and *An Englishman Looks at the World* (1914) he has set forth his economic faith with acuteness, a power of independent and original inquiry and clear-sighted constructive theory. His hope in life is based upon the things seen and temporal: the New Jerusalem of Mr. Wells does not descend from heaven but is of the earth earthy, a world transfigured by an impossibly wise and bureaucratic régime, a higher education on strictly practical and utilitarian lines, and the emancipation of life from the fetters of unrefreshing labour by the continuous development of mechanic invention. Man thus set free will climb to higher planes of health and beauty. To inquire into Mr. Wells's sociology, as we discover it in these volumes or in his fantastic romance, *The World Set Free* (1914), is here unnecessary, save in so far as it illustrates the working of his mind and imagination. In one aspect his visions and dreams are those of an idealist, in another they are

commonplace and deficient in the one thing needful. He has been accused of possessing the soul of an average mechanic; and as an epitome of his whole standpoint toward life the indictment is not unjustifiable. If he confesses to a difficulty in understanding why a railway embankment is ugly and a natural hillock beautiful, if he fails to find spiritual inspiration in the older faiths of men, if he can hope complacently for an age in which the whole population shall be swallowed in great cities, the individual sunk beneath a tyrannous bureaucracy, and man little more than a fly on the wheels of relentless mechanism, he has abandoned so much that the most of men would live for more than all this, that we must hold him to have missed what the world really seeks.

If, however, his allurements will fail to charm more than a tithe of men, these books, written in a popular manner, are the serious contributions of an acute and original mind to the solution of pressing problems of the day; and the insight of the writer, especially in destructive criticism, stimulates thought.

Before he addressed his readers with documents on sociological theory Mr. Wells had won fame with books of an entirely different stamp, books with which his name is still commonly associated in the ordinary mind, although for years he has abandoned them for the far better work contained in his realistic novels. His romantic and sensational tales, based upon modern scientific theory and the development of mechanical invention, gained him a wide popularity. These stories are distinguished by the vivacity of their narrative manner, by ingenuity in the conception of situation, by excellent humour, and in several of the tales—*The Invisible Man* (1897) is a good example—by an astonishingly original imagination.

The series opened with *The Time Machine*, descriptive of the experiences of a man who invents a machine which can transport him at will into past or future time. This was followed in the same year by two other volumes, *The Wonderful Visit*, in which an angel visitant to earth is shot by a vicar, and the short stories, amusing, grotesque, macabre, of *The Stolen Bacillus*. Other collections of short stories, *Tales of Space and Time* (1899), *Twelve Stories and a Dream* (1903) and *The Country of the Blind*

(1911) show the same versatility of fancy, and incorporate elements of serious criticism and speculation. Among longer tales, combining in the same manner pure fantasy with scientific knowledge, are *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), a story of the invasion of the earth by inhabitants of Mars, *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899), a disheartening picture of society in 2100 A.D. when men are enslaved by machinery, *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) and *The Food of the Gods* (1904).

But Mr. Wells has never been a public entertainer and nothing more. While he was writing the shapeless narrative of *When the Sleeper Wakes* he was trying to do better things in *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900); and four years earlier in *The Wheels of Chance* (1896), the story of illumination in the mind of a draper's assistant, he used his power of drawing human character under conditions of everyday reality. *Love and Mr. Lewisham* emphatically showed Mr. Wells's ability *celebrare domestica facta*. It relates the life-story of a very ordinary and by no means admirable young man of limited education, a schoolmaster and university student, who begins life with high ambitions and a spirit of stern discipline which are to lead him on the road to success. He falls in love, his code of discipline drops to pieces, he marries without an income and ruins all his hopes of advancement. It is a depressingly realistic picture of a raw youth, half-educated and of half-formed character, collapsing in the competitive struggle of life. The merits of the book are its strong and faithful character-drawing and its satiric humour.

Five years later Mr. Wells took up again realistic and serious fiction with the longer and more ambitious *Kipps* (1905), a study in the mind of a young draper's assistant, who unexpectedly inherits money and finds himself in surroundings and among people unfamiliar. This was followed by two books scarcely less good, *Tono-Bungay* (1909) and *Anne Veronica* (1909). The former is again the story of an unfledged boy's contact with the world and his growth to manhood; and incidentally it is the story of the exploitation of a patent medicine. The latter is the story of a middle-class girl's emancipation. *Anne Veronica* aroused an unnecessary outburst of moral

indignation. It has no evil tendency; and is one of the best and truest tales Mr. Wells has written. He has little success, as a rule, in depicting women; none at all in drawing the character of a woman of grace and refinement; but in Anne Veronica he had a type fully within his cognisance, and he scarcely fails in any particular in drawing the heroine of his story and the personalities of those who group themselves about her.

After this, unfortunately, his novels sank under the weight of theory and the indoctrination of the reader with the author's sociological principles. *The New Machiavelli* (1910) is a political and economic document, reflecting contemporary people and events with scarcely a pretence of disguise. Characterisation is laboured; the plot is unwieldy and formless. *Marriage* (1912) takes up the oldest problem of the novelist and dramatist and fails to illuminate the vexed question. Mr. Wells breaks down completely in his representation of the heroine, for he can make no more of her than a shop girl in better circumstances, though she is hypothetically the daughter of educated parents and a woman of culture. And his final device in the transference of husband and wife to Labrador, where in the desert they may again find communion of spirit, is a confession of inability to conclude his story without a weak and clumsy anticlimax. *The Passionate Friends* (1913) fails again for a reason that limited him before. He cannot draw consistently the woman of fine feeling, passionate impulse and good breeding. He has done his best with Lady Mary Justin, but she is false to her position and environment, and her relationship to husband and lover is built upon a series of manufactured situations. And, further, the dramatic movement of the tale is needlessly hindered by long digressions upon the economics of labour in different quarters of the world. These excursions will be of interest to a few readers, but their place is the set treatise. Mr. Wells scarcely pretends to bind them in with the web of his story. And in style he has grown careless. The easy-going, conversational manner degenerates into careless garrulity.

If we are to judge Mr. Wells as a writer of novels on everyday life we shall find the high-water mark of his

work in four books, *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, *Kipps*, *Tono-Bungay* and *Anne Veronica*. After 1909 he allowed the theory of his sociological writings, or other extraneous matter, to drift into his novels, with the inevitable consequence that he has lost his earlier lightness of touch, ease and resourcefulness in character-portrayal. Not that this change has been unconscious. Mr. Wells is, at least, justified of his own principles; for the novel as a work of art, representative of life and not of didactic theory, he has chosen to eschew. He claims for the novel that it shall be discursive and contemptuously negligent of form and plot construction, that it shall embrace all ethics, law, politics within its borders—it is to be "the parade of morals and the exchange of manners, the factory of customs, the criticism of laws and institutions and of social dogmas and ideas." It will be the function of the novelist not to teach, but to "discuss, point out, plead and display." Few will refuse their assent to Mr. Wells's contention that the novel may be at free will discursive, especially if he justify his theory by the example of Laurence Sterne. It is certainly true, to quote Mr. Wells again, that "every novel carries its own justification and its own condemnation in its success or failure to convince you that *the thing was so*." All questions of length and the presence or absence of plot are beside the mark in ruling a book as a novel or not a novel. But Mr. Wells forgets that all beauty is of line or colour, or these two in combination. The colour of life without form is like a shapeless mist through which the warm sunlight uncertainly struggles: its colour perceived and rendered back by an orderly imagination is like a panorama of woods, valleys, hills and cloud-mountains seen in the clear light of day—the complete beauty of the world, form and colour combined. The discursiveness of Mr. Wells's later novels is like the uncertain struggling of light to pierce a mist: so far from the narrative illuminating theory, theory obscures narrative and character; and this is the abyss in which all didactic art is lost.

But in those books which have been given a higher place in the tale of his work Mr. Wells is more consistently the artist. His opinions and prepossessions may not be hidden; they are not, however, a burden and a drag

upon the action. The hero of *Love and Mr. Lewisham* is drawn with a sureness and economy of line, with a subtlety of satire and humour, with a skilled handling of plot which leave nothing to be desired. And *Kipps*, in which the author reveals something of his own experience, has just that power, which Mr. Wells names, of convincing us that it must be so. *Tono-Bungay* only suffers by comparison; and *Anne Veronica*, in which Mr. Wells abandons the raw youth he is continually sketching for the bold attempt to portray a young woman not dissimilarly placed, is a complete success in convincing realism.

Mr. Wells is not a great artist; he has nothing of the glow and fervour of sympathy which inspire the greater writer in his contact with simple and impulsive human beings. Men and women as creatures of flesh and blood he does not know as Mr. Conrad and Mr. Arnold Bennett know them. His intellectual acuteness enables him to seize the psychology of individual minds within a certain range; but the clearer, the more generous, the more idealistic mind is outside his knowledge or his power to render. His description of character is external, not intimate. He began as a writer of tales in which the reader's attention was to be caught by the clever handling of incident; and to the last the easy, vivid and colloquial manner of narrative counts for much. The truth is Mr. Wells is an excellent story-teller to the men of his generation.

Arnold Bennett, b. 1867. d. 1931

Mr. Arnold Bennett, with Mr. H. G. Wells, is, both in England and America, one of the most popular novelists of the day. He is versatile, remarkably prolific, he has wit and humour, he is observant of types, classes and individuals, he is gifted with a power of endowing his characters with an abounding life in a degree which reminds us of Dickens whom he has decried; yet his work contains little that can be counted of even passing significance to the evolution of modern fiction, for, much as he has written upon the art of literature, it is impossible to discover principles either of art or life in his work. Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Conrad, Mr. Masefield, Mr. H. G. Wells are definitive of some positive attitude of mind toward nature and man: Mr. Bennett chronicles the Five Towns and peoples that dreary tract of England

with living men and women; he interests and entertains, but he leaves all things as they were before. The other novelists whom we have named at random cannot be read without the consciousness that our mental horizon has been modified or enlarged. Mr. Bennett impresses us with being a versatile, nervous, extremely perspicuous *raconteur*, journalist, essayist, playwright, in touch with the lives of individual men and women, his mind replete with novel, striking and entertaining ideas and turns of thought, quick to conceive uncommon situations; but these varied gifts, the multiple kinds of work he produces, are not knit into any positive unity by force of strong personality without which no writing can endure beyond a few days or years.

Mr. Bennett professes to have attacked the outposts of literature as an "apprentice of Flaubert et Cie"; but he more often reminds us of a modern and different Dickens. Like Dickens Mr. Bennett is of the people, and, like Dickens, he is only too ready, for the sake of royalties, to accommodate his writing to anything the public wants. It is true he distinguishes between his "fantasias" and his serious work, as did Grant Allen, but we can only suspect that so continuous an output for which the author professes no admiration must be detrimental to his power of producing better work which claims his faith and belief. Nevertheless he has continued to publish side by side books of outstanding merit, like *The Old Wives' Tale*, of second-rate character, like *The Card*, and sensational shockers, like *Hugo* and *The City of Pleasure*. The most consistent and least versatile person has his moods and phases, but a deliberate division of the imagination by bulkheads is like the wilful indulgence in a dangerous anatomical experiment, almost certain to cause a fracture if carried far enough. In any case it is a device that calls for less admiration than the consistent effort to produce only for the sake of the best that is in oneself. To throw alarums and excursions contemptuously to the groundlings is one thing, to practise on different levels of workmanship by set hours each day is another.

Mr. Bennett was born in the pottery district of Staffordshire, and his best work is built upon recollections of his

boyhood in this dreary region. He spent some years in a lawyer's office before turning to journalism and editorial work. And he produced in these early years his first book, *A Man from the North* (1898), writing with Flaubert and the De Goncourt brothers in mind. Brevity, good construction and an unshrinking rendering of life's grey tones—these were his ideals in his first book. And *A Man from the North* is by no means an unsuccessful piece of writing. In part the story of the young man from Bursley, who comes to London, enters an office as a clerk and drifts into literary aspirations, is autobiographical. The reviews were not wholly complimentary, and the financial return was negligible. Mr. Bennett therefore resolved to give the subscribers to lending libraries what they sought, and in this resolve he wrote his " fantasias " and " frolics," which were regarded by the author merely as cheap goods tricked out for popular consumption. Among these commercial successes may be named the extravagant and absurd *Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902), *The Loot of Cities* (1905), *Hugo* (1906) and *The City of Pleasure* (1907). Not unlike these, but better, is *Buried Alive* (1908), the story of the shy artist taken for dead in the person of his valet, his glad acceptance of the popular mistake and burial of himself in obscure life. It is a good extravaganza, worked up later into the play, *The Great Adventure*. More uncommon and original is *The Glimpse* (1909), first written as a short story, which relates the experience of a man who falls into a trance and has a glimpse of life beyond death.

But Mr. Bennett holds whatever position he may be accounted to have in the world of letters to-day by none of these books, but by a series of novels in which he has painted realistically the life of people in the Five Towns, a name he has given to the pottery district of Staffordshire. In these he has given us work, serious and humorous, always original, deriving from nothing save observation of life. In his first novel he had drawn a Staffordshire lad outside his native environment. The first unit in his new series, *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), is the dreary story of a girl crushed by the brutal tyranny of a father, disappointed in love, yet dutiful. *Leonora* (1903) is a tale of unhappy marriage set in the same drab surroundings.

But better far than these is *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), in which for the first time Mr. Bennett succeeded in reaching large outline in his telling of a story. The narrative is almost uniformly grey: yet, sordid and sad though it may be, it is a book to which we return, confident that this is not fiction but an excerpt from life. A draper's shop, a dull and dingy square in Bursley, a third-rate *pension* in Paris, these form a background to the life-story of two women, whom we follow from girlhood to old age. It is a round, unvarnished tale, written in a bald style, with but few passages of Mr. Bennett's ironical humour. Idealism, colour, light, of these there is hardly a trace; but the truthfulness of the characterisation compels our belief. *The Old Wives' Tale* was Mr. Bennett's first notable book. It was followed by two others, first members of a trilogy, which take their place only a little below it, representative of the best that Mr. Bennett can give us in the painting of the Five Towns. *Clayhanger* (1910) and *Hilda Lessways* (1911) are tales that cannot be dissociated from the smoky atmosphere of the potteries. Mr. Bennett knows and loves this region in its grimy squalor and its blurred beauty—a region of

> "ragged brickwork, walls finished anyhow with saggars and slay; narrow uneven alleys leading to higgeldy-piggeldy workshops and kilns; cottages transformed into factories and factories into cottages . . . the reign of the slovenly makeshift, shameless, filthy and picturesque."

But there is another side to the picture:

> "Bursley—tall chimneys and rounded ovens, schools, the new scarlet market, the grey tower of the old church, the high spire of the evangelical church, the low spire of the church of genuflexions, and the crimson chapels, and rows of little red houses with amber chimney-pots, and the gold angel of the blackened Town Hall topping the whole. The sedate reddish browns and reds of the composition, all netted in flowing scarves of smoke, harmonised exquisitely with the chill blues of the chequered sky. Beauty was achieved, and none saw it."

It is in this atmosphere and against this background that Mr. Bennett sets his best work.

The three books last-named embody his serious intention and aim as an artist. Of a different type are *The Card* (1911) and its sequel, *The Regent* (1913). These are stories of the Five Towns, but reality is abandoned for an extravagant and entertaining chronicle of the surprising adventures in success and money-making of Denry, "the card," who is the hero of picaresque romance attired in modern dress and venturing on modern enterprises. These tales, if of less value than Mr. Bennett's best, are not to be confused with his commercial "frolics." They contain, mingled with melodrama, elements of good character-drawing and truthful rendering of situation.

It is, however, by three books that Mr. Bennett is to be judged. Of these two, *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger* are conceived in broader outline and carried through with greater success than *Hilda Lesssways*, which is scarcely a worthy sequel to its predecessor. It leaves an impression of weariness and inability to reach again the standard already attained. Mr. Bennett's thoroughly good and outstanding work is, therefore, to be counted in two volumes and a third which does not attain to the two first. In these he has reflected forcibly the life of a cramped and isolated area. His potters, artisans, mechanics, printers, drapers, Bethel ministers, with their wives and daughters, live in dull squares, smoke-grimed streets or filthy alleys, but within that range their experience is an experience common to humanity.

Nevertheless something is wanting. Mr. Bennett's sympathies and his conception of the meaning of life are not sufficiently removed from those of his characters, who work in the shop during the week and go to chapel with unction on Sunday. He knows them because he is of them: but he can never place himself at a distance in order to see the meaning of their lives. Nor does he conceive life with any large background. The difference will be apparent if we contrast Mr. Bennett with Mr. Thomas Hardy. Mr. Hardy is both of his peasantry and not of them; and, further, he sees that beyond the life of the individual there is a something that is greater than he. In Mr. Bennett's tales there is nothing of this:

his vision is the sharply-defined and concrete view of the chapel, but without its dogmas. And, consequently, his picture of life, wonderfully true as it seems, is only true within limitations: poetry and idealism are almost absent (though not wholly, for of these there is a trace in *Clayhanger*). The concepts of the shop and the desk still limit Mr. Bennett and Mr. Wells, and most in the hour of their emancipation.

John Galsworthy, b. 1867.

Mr. Galsworthy is a realistic writer whose method and manner is set worlds apart from that of Mr. Bennett and Mr. Wells. Whether as a novelist or dramatist we recognise in him the same judicial temper, the same close observation which allows no detail to pass, the same impartial weighing of evidence, the same acerbity mingled with strong moral intensity, the same passion for justice and righteousness. Social and economic problems govern his drama; they are the stuff from which he extracts fiction. In an age when the novel had not the advantages of the platform, pulpit and treatise Mr. Galsworthy would not have written fiction; for he is not in love with life first of all. He does not feel and then try to know: he strives to come into contact with humanity by learning to know about it. As an American writer has admirably said, he puts "ethics and sociology, manners and customs, mankind in the aggregate, overwhelmingly ahead of the individual." Cold ratiocination is continually defeating the artist in Mr. Galsworthy.

Despite the narrowness of his intellectual and emotional sympathies he has, however, won general recognition, both in England and America, as the protagonist of a new drama and fiction. He made his appearance as a novelist long before he attempted writing for the stage; for he published four volumes of fiction under the pseudonym John Sinjohn before printing his own name on the title-page. None of these is worthy of any special mention. Two are collections of short tales; and *Villa Rubein* (1900), the second of the longer essays in fiction, is a story, not at all remarkable, of a painter who arouses opposition from the family of the woman he loves because he is poor and holds unconventional opinions. If the book in itself is not noteworthy, it is of interest in that it con-

tains the seed of Mr. Galsworthy's later work, for it is a study of conflict between a man of independent and original mind and the canons of the social code. It was, however, with the publication of *The Island Pharisees* (1904) four years later, that he assumed his later manner and definitely began to handle his one theme, the injustice, the folly of social inequality and exclusiveness. On this foundation he has continued to write since both in fiction and drama. In *The Island Pharisees* he delivered the truth that was in him. He has done little since save amplify, expand and comment. The world is too large, its interests too diversified, its problems too complex and interwoven to permit of being truthfully painted upon a canvas so narrow as Mr. Galsworthy chooses. The intention is so obvious that we suspect the author of seeing only the dusty yard, unmindful of the green slopes and wide horizons over the wall. The social economy looms before Mr. Galsworthy's gaze like an overhanging cliff; he forgets that it is only a tithe of the real meaning and content of life to the great majority, who are but rarely conscious of its presence. To most eyes its proportions are those of the mole hill, not the middle wall of division.

The Island Pharisees, the first book entirely characteristic of Mr. Galsworthy's temperament and reading of life, has few pretensions as a work of art. It presents in a series of pictures the disillusionment of a man who is brought into contact with differing grades of social life, to meet in each with the same shams and false standards. The scenes and chapters have so slight a connection with each other that the whole resolves itself into little more than a rambling story with a moral. Only two characters are seen with any clearness, Shelton, the questioning and disillusioned hero, and Louis Ferrand, the vagabond. The other characters are withdrawn into a misty background, and used to illustrate the follies of the social economy. A large part of the book would have been more effective had Mr. Galsworthy thrown it into the form of a direct treatise upon social evils.

Far larger and more elaborate in conception is *The Man of Property* (1906). In the text of the book Mr. Galsworthy remarks ironically upon the anomaly of the novel

without a plot; but he has certainly taken to heart his failure in *The Island Pharisees* and learned, in consequence, several lessons. Satire in shapeless prose narrative is abandoned for a long, intricate, but well-constructed chronicle of the rich middle-class family of the Forsytes. Scarcely a figure outside the Forsyte family in all its ramifications is allowed to intrude upon the narrative with the exception of Bosinney, the architect, who is engaged to one of the Forsyte girls and used to throw into high relief her family's smug and complacent respectability. The Forsyte family is large, the complications of their relationships are not always easy to follow; but in this book Mr. Galsworthy began definitely to show that faculty so distinctive of all his later work—a remarkable economy in narrative and dialogue, combined with the power to give an impression of the literal rendering of life without omission. He never writes with brilliance, he has no passion for ensnaring with aphorism or phrase, his highest light is a subdued grey, he paints the meaningless monotony of life upon every page, he is not in love with individual men and women, his humour is slight and sardonic, but he has a concentrated intensity, sometimes one-sided, rarely exaggerated, which clearly marks him off from other writers of the day. *The Man of Property* is a large book, but it is closely condensed; the story has few loose strands, no needless chapters. Mr. Galsworthy simply uses the Forsyte family to represent in type the smug and well-to-do part of the English middle class, and Soames Forsyte is the pattern of their moneyed respectability. The fault of this, as of every work to which Mr. Galsworthy sets his hand, is not so much the moral intention as the harshly-defined preconception with which the author embarks upon his narrative. The faults of the social economy are many, but they are not a continual and unavoidable obsession upon individual lives. The truth of each life is something unaffected by the social economy; and it is the function of the writer and the poet to know and reveal this inner truth. But Mr. Galsworthy rarely sees men and women save through the veil of a social economy, and therefore his vision is continually distorted.

The Country House (1907) has probably been the most

popular of Mr. Galsworthy's tales. It is slighter than *The Man of Property*, less subtle and intricate, and therefore easier to read. The insincerity of life in an English country house, its spirit of landlordism, its acceptance of established traditions and its entire satisfaction with things as they are form the background of satire in this book. In his rendering of the atmosphere of an average country home Mr. Galsworthy is wonderfully successful; and in condensation and intensity the tale compares well with its predecessor. *The Country House* and *Fraternity* (1909) are the complement of each other; the one a picture of life in the country, the other a representation of upper middle class and professional life in London; and the latter is more intimately concerned with social questions. In the two preceding novels the old theme of the incompatible marriage-tie is combined with satire upon British prejudices: in *Fraternity* the husband discovers that, cramped by the narrow ideas of the world, he cannot act the kindly brother to a poor and wretched artist's model without arousing suspicion and ill-thinking. The rich and the poor are grouped and contrasted, and Mr. Galsworthy's lesson is the evil of a society so ordered that the true brotherhood of man is impossible till we transgress its canons and judgments. Of this book it may be said that in brevity, concentration of interest and artistic shapeliness it is his best piece of work.

In *The Patrician* (1911) Mr. Galsworthy breaks new ground, and with indifferent success. His picture of the Caradocs, an aristocratic English family and their relations, is wanting in the verisimilitude of his chronicle of the Forsytes; and we suspect, in reading, that Mr. Galsworthy writes at second hand or from supposition, not with knowledge. The narrative fails to hold, the characters are but faintly impressed upon the imagination. The unkind criticism that the book might have been written by Mrs. Humphry Ward is hardly true; for Mrs. Ward's sympathies would obviously be on the side of that social opinion which prevents the union with another man of a woman who has ceased to live with her husband. Mr. Galsworthy leaves the two resigned to the tragedy of inoffensive acquiescence, but he does not accept the situation. On the other hand, it is not unjust to say that

characterisation is weaker and more vacillating than is the case with Mrs. Ward at her best: Mr. Galsworthy is less at home in his environment than Mrs. Ward would have been. In workmanship and force this book represents a backsliding. And *The Dark Flower* (1913) is an aberration in the work of Mr. Galsworthy as unfortunate as *Le Lys Rouge* in the work of M. Anatole France. The three irregular love adventures of Mark Lennan are wholly unconvincing, because from the outset Mr. Galsworthy failed to conceive the character of his hero. These three sketches of passion, for *The Dark Flower* is no novel, are hung *in vacuo;* and long before the close the reader has lost interest in the fate of any of the actors save the injured wife of the middle-aged and rather ridiculous sculptor, who is the protagonist of the story.

Little can be added here as a general commentary upon Mr. Galsworthy's achievement as a novelist, which would not involve the repetition of observations more naturally in their place in an estimate of his work as a dramatist; for as a playwright he has been able to express himself more fully and with a greater measure of artistry. Mr. Galsworthy was, in former years, a barrister, and the judicial temper is the strongest characteristic of his genius. If he is also a pleader of causes, and a pleader who rises to passionate exhortation and denunciation, his passion is wholly of the intellect. He has considered the constitution of modern society and seen that it is bad. In the plays and the novels his voice is ceaselessly raised against the great curse laid upon man as a social being, that inequality of classes which leads to the establishment of one law for the rich and another for the poor. But it is ever of man that Mr. Galsworthy thinks and not of men. Men and women individually, and apart from the greater whole they typify, are not bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. The cold impartiality, the judicially analytic temper of Mr. Galsworthy hinder his best efforts to come near to his fellows as a man with men. It is a curious irony of circumstance that the writer, who of all living English novelists is most stirred to moral indignation by the pain and suffering of mankind, should also as a writer be so patently lacking in the poetry of a warmer human passion. His novels and the collected sketches of *A Com-*

mentary (1908) and *A Motley* (1910) are exemplifications of the author's gift of analytic insight, of his skill in rejecting all that is irrelevant, and retaining all that is essential, to creating that hard and brilliant light in which he sees the world; and they are, further, a confession of his inability to introduce those warmer tones which are also a part of life. The mind of Mr. Galsworthy is that of the judicial summer-up of cases, not that of the poet and imaginative artist.

Eden Phillpotts, b. 1862.

The three writers named above describe man as he lives in the towns, in contact with the industrialism, the political agitation, the curious searchings of the age. The statement calls for some qualification; for Mr. Bennett is a chronicler of provincial life in a small area; but his people belong to the street and the factory, not to the soil. It was inevitable, however, that Mr. Hardy's great series of Wessex novels should suggest to others the potentialities of the tale of agricultural life limited to a few square miles. Many regional novels have been published latterly, but the West Country holds its own, and Mr. Eden Phillpotts and Mr. John Trevena, though their work is deplorably unequal, when writing at their best come nearer than any others to the supreme greatness of Mr. Hardy. When a young man Mr. Eden Phillpotts was for a number of years a clerk in an insurance office; before he definitely turned to authorship he essayed the stage, only to discover himself unfitted for the actor's profession. After writing several earlier tales with indifferent success he gained a reputation with two books, *Lying Prophets* (1897) and *Children of the Mist* (1899). In the second he adopted for the background of his narrative Dartmoor; and for fourteen or fifteen years he produced annually his novel of the moor, gradually evolving a regular and stereotyped mould for shaping each book. The volume begins with its introductory description of moorland, and each division of the tale is clearly marked by another descriptive passage, followed again by a standard length of narrative. Each year he learned to adhere more closely to his pattern, until the reader could safely predict the development of the plot.

Mr. Phillpotts has taken himself with some seriousness as an artist and painter of moorland life. The style, the method and the size of his books has been dictated by an ambition to write strongly, sincerely and thoughtfully. The model, and it could hardly be otherwise, has been Mr. Thomas Hardy. But Mr. Phillpotts' reach comes short of his intention. The greatness of the Wessex novels, despite their stiffness and occasional ponderosity, is the universal implication carried by a tale of narrow life. Destiny, all-powerful, heedless, impersonal, governs the little ways of men, who act in the belief that they move freely while about them for ever is earth with her bars. And Mr. Hardy gains his grand and impressive effect because his mind is naïve and simple. His range is not wide. Like the child, however, he feels intensely; his insight is clearer and deeper than that of most men. Mr. Phillpotts' mind is complex, his ideas sophisticated, he is sensitive to the newest philosophy of life and morals; and, therefore, he is a far lesser artist than Mr. Hardy. In nearly all his novels we are conscious of strain—the intention is unfulfilled. There is a wide gulf fixed between the book as he designed it and the completed work. In the Wessex novels the composition is equivalent to the original inspiration.

In the case of a writer who keeps so closely to his desk as Mr. Phillpotts it would be impossible to give even a meagre sketch of his many books. Nearly all his novels have for their background the Dartmoor hills; the tale is invariably founded upon the primitive passions as they express themselves in action in obscure and homespun lives; the theme is varied but little—two men love one woman, one woman loves two men, one or the other is the base of many of his plots.

Lying Prophets was approved by one reviewer as the strongest thing of its kind since *Esther Waters*. The scene is laid in Cornwall. Joan Tregenza, daughter of Michael, a religious fanatic, is seduced by Barron, an artist, who comes to stay in the village for the sake of his health. For *him* the phase is no more than one of his many moods; *she* finds herself deserted with the prospect of becoming a mother. For long the post brings no word from her lover. When the letter comes at last it is from a dying

man; and she, as she hurries to him, meets with death on a wild night of storm. Her corpse is discovered by the man to whom she was affianced before Barron crossed her path. The conclusion reminds us of Mr. Hardy's *Return of the Native;* and, like the earlier tale, Mr. Phillpotts' story suffers from an element of the improbable and melodramatic.

Children of the Mist, though exasperatingly loose in plot-construction, is an advance in realism and characterisation. The tale brings us to Dartmoor; and from this date Mr. Phillpotts followed his stereotyped pattern sedulously and with varying success. Among the best of the later books are *The River* (1902), in which the Dart dominates the whole tale, *The Secret Woman* (1905), *The Whirlwind* (1907), *The Mother* (1908), *The Three Brothers* (1909). On a secondary level may be placed *Sons of the Morning* (1900), the over-literary and pedantic *American Prisoner* (1904), *The Portreeve* (1906) and *The Forest on the Hill* (1912). Besides these he has written a number of volumes of lesser note and published various collections of short tales.

The Beacon (1911) differed from its Dartmoor predecessors for a number of years by choosing for theme a contrast between Lizzie Denster, the woman from the cities dimly aware of new ideas, with the simple men and women of the village. The contrast is treated strongly and with effect; and the book marks a pleasurable break in the monotony of Mr. Phillpotts' plot-ideas. And *Widecombe Fair* (1913) was again a surprise. Mr. Phillpotts' humour is occasional and laboured; but in *Widecombe Fair* he has written a large book, without plot or story worthy the name, in which, with a very genuine humour, he has sketched in large outline and as one picture the whole life of a village. Differing in character from most of his work, it was one of his best and most human books for many years.

In *Widecombe Fair* Mr. Phillpotts believed himself to have brought to a conclusion the long series of his Dartmoor novels, and he contributed to the volume a foreword, in which, quoting Nietzsche, he declared that it had been his attempt as a writer to say "yea" to life, "to display a will to life rejoicing at its own vitality,"

to write of things as they are and thus escape the "hell of realism or sentimentality." Thence he turned to justify himself against the charge that his scenery played as important part in the plot as the characters of the tale. He asserted rightly that man is of the seasons and elements, moulded in his career by the forces of nature. The story of man's environment is the story of man. "We may incarnate the seasons and set them moving, mighty and magic-fingered, upon the face of the earth, to tell a story laden with unsleeping activities, mysterious negations and frustrations, battles and plots, tragedies and triumphs."

If any one book of Mr. Phillpotts is to be chosen before the others, perhaps *The Whirlwind* is the most complete, rounded and artistic piece of work he has given us. The plot is handled with skill and resourcefulness, the characters are few, the three principal actors, two men and a woman, are powerfully drawn, and the interplay of animal vitality, morbid ill-health, scepticism and religious belief gives the tale a strong interest. The old story—the sacrifice of virtue for the sake of the husband—is handled by Mr. Phillpotts in a strikingly new and original manner.

The limitations of Mr. Phillpotts' work are patent to all. Talent deliberately and industriously directed is the source of these novels; inspiration is rare, save in those moments of impassioned nature-painting in which Mr. Phillpotts shows himself a master of style and language. The dialogue of his tales only too often belongs not to the characters but to the author; and the thoughts which find utterance in the dialect of his peasantry are far beyond their range. Their conversations are wholly unreal; and the majority of his secondary characters are untrue to type, invented not on the moor but in the study. As a chronicler of moorland people Mr. Phillpotts will not bear comparison with John Trevena. Further, both in dialogue and description he is lengthy and formless; he would be a better artist were he content with fewer words. Nevertheless, though not possessed of a creative or original mind, he is not without the power of drawing character vividly and truly; and his work is always thoughtful, for Mr. Phillpotts has sincerely and earnestly considered life, weighing its meaning in the balances.

The literature of Dartmoor has been growing steadily for many years. The fascination of this bare upland is natural, for it is one of the few wild and untameable tracts of southern England. A land of barren wastes, sharp tors, craggy hills rising abruptly into wind, mist and rain; it is set like a rugged island, cliff-bound, among the shady orchards and meadowed valleys of Devonshire. At its greatest height it is a little over two thousand feet; it stretches only twenty-three miles north and south and twenty east and west. But height and expanse are no measure for a hill-country. Low hills, abrupt and contrasting sharply with their surroundings, have all the effect and grandeur of greater mountains in other situations. Dartmoor is a land to itself, inhabited, like Tyrol or the highlands of Bavaria, by a peculiar mountain race; a land of steep skies, rolling clouds, shrouding mists and the unceasing rustle of the wind in heather and grass.

It is impossible to name Mr. Phillpotts as an historian of the moor without being tempted to a comparison with John Trevena (Ernest G. Henham). And, whether as a landscape artist or as a painter of human character, John Trevena has the greater genius of the two. Mr. Phillpotts, in introductory chapters, has a hundred times described the moor, but the manner has grown stereotyped, and in each chapter that heralds a new division of the book we learn what to expect. It is good writing, often beautiful, but the matter is nearly always extraneous to the story and the manner is laboured. And, further, his peasantry are products of the study, not of observation and experience; they talk not as any Devonshire moorman ever talked, but, as a reviewer wittily observed, like "Dons who have forgotten their grammar." The people of Mr. Phillpotts' tales are, with some exceptions, an artifice invented beneath the glow of the study lamp.

John Trevena.

In the novels of John Trevena Dartmoor becomes a symbol, a brooding genius of destiny. It is this remarkable power to personify the forces of nature, to endow the background of life's tragedy with mysterious significance, that makes *Furze the Cruel* (1907) and *Granite* (1909) such astonishing books. The blind cruelty of the will to live in conflict with fate, circumstance and character is drawn

with a forcibleness which throws all but one or two writers of the day into the shade. *Furze the Cruel*, save for the carelessness of its design and the tiresome passages relating to the love affairs of Aubrey and Boodles, is one of the most impressive and overpowering books since *Jude the Obscure*. In another aspect the style and the characters suggest comparison with the craftsmanship of the author of *The House with the Green Shutters*. It remains the strongest book John Trevena has written; and its merit is not confined to any single characteristic. The introductory chapter, 'About Raindrops,' is a piece of prose and fine symbolism beyond the range and imagination of most writers; the story of Pendoggat and his fearful fate has the note of great tragedy; and other chapters of the book are quickened with a prodigality of unforced humour. *Furze* is the first member of a trilogy, continued with *Heather* (1908) and completed with *Granite* (1909). "Almost everywhere on Dartmoor are Furze, Heather and Granite. The Furze seems to suggest Cruelty, the Heather Endurance and Granite Strength." As is often the case the later members of the group fall short of the first. It may be admitted that to illustrate the power of Endurance is more difficult than to exhibit the force of Cruelty; but even if this qualification be taken into account *Heather* is a book much inferior to its forerunner. The characters do not impress themselves upon the imagination, the plot is confused and the humour is often far-sought. In *Granite* John Trevena does not rival *Furze*, yet he goes far toward reaching again the standard of his earlier work. The symbolic significance of Dartmoor granite is inwoven with the play of human tragedy and comedy with a fine poetic power. The author describes how every day the old stone-breaker, Will Yeo, attacks the granite in his attempt to clear a patch of the moor.

> "There was the intoxicating fascination of a gigantic work in which strength alone could serve, with just a little cunning added. There was the wild music made by the iron and stone to be listened to through life; chief of all the privilege of being out alone every day subduing a force, while looking over what appeared to be the whole world stretched below, with the keen

winds tossing the clouds along, and strange voices coming out of the nooks and corners—that was to live and not know weakness."

In consistency, balance and power *Furze* and *Granite* stand first among John Trevena's books. The trilogy was preceded by *A Pixy in Petticoats* (1906), a slight and entertaining narrative and the most popular of his books, and *Arminel of the West* (1907), which was a failure and deserved to be. The tale is absurdly disjointed and inconsequent, violent and morbid.

Since the completion of his trilogy John Trevena has never again written with equal power. There are in *Bracken* (1910) passages descriptive of grasses and flowers which rival the best writing of Jefferies; but the curious story, based upon the study of dual personality, lapses into a confused welter of mysticism and morbid imagination. *Wintering Hay* (1912) combines the chaotic mysticism of *Bracken* with stronger elements from the preceding volumes. The descriptions of Blue Violet are most beautiful, and in the characterisation of the vagabond scoundrel, Kit Coke, John Trevena regains his earlier vein of humour; but, in all, the book is a confused and shapeless piece of work. *Sleeping Waters* (1913) is the story of the hallucination of a madman, and the unbridled imagination of the author runs riot. The lack of constructive art and the elaborate aimlessness of the dialogue in *No Place Like Home* (1913) render the whole book wearisome.

In performance John Trevena has never fully realised his powers. *Furze the Cruel* contained writing that stood out in the wastes of contemporary fiction as something wholly exceptional and astonishing in relentless force, sardonic humour and the rude strength of the character-drawing; and the sheer poetry and beauty of many of the descriptive passages were unrivalled by any writer who had worked in the same field. In comparison Mr. Phillpotts and Mr. Baring-Gould were weaklings achieving failure and only to be commended for good intention. Unfortunately John Trevena, though imagination and poetry are still with him, has never reached the same level of writing again. But whether or no he ever pro-

duces a fitting companion to *Furze*, it was a remarkable achievement to have written that one book.

Among living novelists the number of those who may be counted with the realistic painters of life is so large that the choice of illustrative and typical names becomes a matter of almost insuperable difficulty; and, further, the dividing line between novels and novelists in their differing kinds is not easy to draw. A good study in contrast between the new and the older method of representing men and manners in contemporary life will be found in the apposition of Mr. Gilbert Cannan and William de Morgan. They are both frank, uncompromising, ironical, humorous, discursive, careless in their methods and often as much occupied with their own ideas upon life as the characters they delineate, yet in style and manner they are wholly dissimilar. The one attempts to use the novel in a new way, the other follows the Victorian tradition. Among novelists of the youngest generation hardly one has shown greater promise than Mr. Gilbert Cannan, who writes as one conversant with books, culture and the affairs of men, whether in high places or shabby nooks and forsaken corners. Moreover he is possessed of wit, a happy turn of irony, and a faculty for handling reflections upon life with an acuteness and originality which is reminiscent of Samuel Butler. This resemblance is most noticeable in *Round the Corner* (1913), a story of ups and downs in a clergyman's family. Mr. Cannan cannot be accused of plagiarising, he may never have read *The Way of All Flesh*, but it is impossible not to call Butler to mind when reading his book. The resemblance is less in the story and characters than in the ironic, yet wise and sympathetic attitude of mind common to both writers. Samuel Butler had more versatility, knowledge and independence; Mr. Cannan writes as a younger man, but as a young man who has thought about life and gained from his experience matter worth the keeping.

Gilbert Cannan, b. 1884.

His first novel, *Peter Homunculus* (1909), is ill-constructed, and falls into two parts so slightly homogeneous that they might well be placed in separate covers, though they relate the story of one life. The picture of Peter

Davies, the raw youth of talent, cataloguing in the second-hand bookshop in Shaftesbury Avenue, and the character of X. Cooper, the shabby book dealer, contain workmanship worthy of high praise. The old man in his shop, mouthing to his boy-assistant philosophies of life and conduct, is an extraordinarily living creature of the imagination. "Fear of life!" he croaks in a broken and uncertain voice. "It is in all of us. That being so, we can do nothing in this world, Homunculus, except to be kind and strive always to be kinder . . . and . . . and damn morality." The earlier portion of the book is wonderfully genuine and true; in the latter half, in which we see Peter emerging into higher planes of social life and taking his part with success in attempts at witty dialogue, the reader grows weary of the monotony and hankers for the more human scenes of the dingy bookshop. The tiresome pages of the second half of the tale are doubtless designed to present a hard contrast with the truth and human interest of the earlier scenes, but they are unnecessarily lengthy and overreach their purpose.

Devious Ways (1910) likewise begins with the story of the hero in boyhood and carries it forward through devious ways—a mean childhood in mean streets, wanderings in America, Africa and the Far East to married life in London. Through it all runs the idea only realised by the hero when he has been faithless, that, "all peace and happiness hang from what men choose to make of women." Mr. Cannan does not shirk the baser and more sordid aspects of life; but he is an idealist. It is he who speaks in the words of his hero when he asserts that the true principles of the dramatic art are not to make people think, but to show the drab, dull and mean as more hopeless and joy-killing than they are, to make people "feel and fully to grasp the guiding principles of the world and of life, to make them see the dividing line between good and evil, between light and darkness, right and wrong." And in his devious and rambling tale Mr. Cannan succeeds in making us feel something of all this, in exciting our faith in the original integrity of human nature. In spite of his biting irony there is something clear, strong and poetic in his style and in his attitude toward the simple realities

of daily life; and he has a fine sense of perspective and proportion in the choosing of what is great and significant in the actions of men and women. Although his commentary upon the world is often tinged with cynicism he still makes us feel that life is to be chosen, for he sees the individual not in isolation, but as a part of the common battle in which we may sometimes triumph and our defeats are not always irretrievable. Mr. Cannan cannot, therefore, understand life represented in isolated incidents and brief crises; he must see his men and women in long perspective. Each of his novels is a life-story. He begins with boyhood, and leads his character to manhood and the knowledge that comes of plucking the fruits of good and evil.

The bondage of the soul and imagination when confined by the bars of social convention is the ruling idea of *Little Brother* (1912), *Round the Corner* and *Old Mole* (1914). In these the conflict of character with environment and artificial education is seen from differing points of view. If Butler's influence may be traced in *Round the Corner*, the inconsequent and aphoristic manner of *Little Brother* reminds us of the author of *Tristram Shandy*. In *Old Mole* Mr. Cannan begins with a whimsical sketch of an old schoolmaster, a student of Lucretius and Voltaire, who, on account of a ridiculous misunderstanding, is flung out of his place and dropped into a travelling theatrical company. Unfortunately the later chapters of the tale subside into what is little more than a sustained cynical diatribe against the false aims of social England. And, as Mr. Cannan has little to do but pour scorn into his judgments of matters in general, his pages grow dull, for we are listening to the special pleader who weakens his case by blackening the cause of his opponents. With Samuel Butler Mr. Cannan is to be counted with the rebels. "Some," he writes, "are sold for work which all their lives they do not comprehend; some are bought in body, some in mind, some in both. The soul, the imagination, is never bought. In bondage it is turned inward, and provokes a sense of wrong, a dull and never-ending ache." In these words is summed the underlying thought of Mr. Cannan's later novels. He is a writer who has studied life and human nature and has something

to say. He has knowledge and wit, and he will throw carelessly into one book what many would use to fit out the content of half a dozen. *Little Brother* is his most original piece of writing ; *Round the Corner* his best novel. Curiously enough, though he has practised the art of the drama, his novels are singularly undramatic. Even if, as in *Round the Corner*, he have a sufficient story to tell, the action of the narrative runs its course through the minds and thoughts of the actors, not in external event.

E. M. Forster, b. 1879.

Mr. E. M. Forster, a careful and fastidious worker, has printed little, if account be taken of the ten years or more during which he has been writing. It may be suspected that the mystic and allegorical tales of *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911), in part inspired by sympathy with the esoteric meaning of classic myth, are nearer to the author's thought and mind than the novels ; for hints of his consciousness of spiritual communion with nature are not infrequent in his tales of commonplace social life, and in *The Longest Journey* (1907) he makes special reference to two tales of *The Celestial Omnibus*. In these stories Mr. Forster shows himself a scholar possessed of poetic imagination, a man of thought, and, at the same time, an observer in satiric mood of quite ordinary and commonplace human beings. His satiric bent of mind is naturally more emphasised in the novels, in which no single admirable character is found. A serious satirist Mr. Forster is, but without bitterness or undue self-importance ; for he has learned of Meredith's Comic Muse, of whom he more than once makes open mention. With Meredith he understands that if life be never wholly as the colour and perfume of the rose, it is likewise never completely a dirty drab, and if not entirely lovable yet not unworthy of love, for man is weak, ever fighting a losing battle against superior forces.

Mr. Forster published first *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), a story of a curious and uncommon character, throwing into contrast, briefly and without great elaboration, the gulfs fixed between the northern temper of an over-civilised Englishwoman and the natural impulses of the South personified in her Italian husband. In this book he makes his characters live, he is successful in

epigram, and his asides are those of a man who stops to think for himself; but his comedy borders on farce and the narrative scarcely escapes the ridiculous. *The Longest Journey*, which is apparently a story in part autobiographical, marks a great advance in concentration, power of sustained effort and the vivifying of a number of characters groping and failing in a world of weak and misguided ideals. This book, together with *The Celestial Omnibus*, in quality of craftsmanship may be counted the best of his writing. *A Room with a View* (1908) is an attempt at a more commonplace type of comedy, despite the author's good memory for Meredith. *Howard's End* (1910) is the most difficult reading of any of his books, and not wholly consistent. The originality of his insight and the independence of his thought give to the writing characteristics of its own, but in the actors as we see them in the conclusion it is difficult to find those whom we met in the earlier stages of the tale. The narrative suggests that the author, suspecting a tameness in incident for the ordinary reader, suddenly betook himself to the overloaded passions and tragedies with which he closes. *Howard's End* would have been a better and more powerful book if Mr. Forster had passed by the stronger emotions.

William de Morgan, 1839–1917.

William de Morgan was the least precocious of novelists, and to this fact, in part, may be attributed the applause with which his first books were received. That a man should print his first novel in his sixty-seventh year is remarkable; and even more remarkable the fact that it should be a distinctive piece of work. As a young man De Morgan yielded to his ambitions as a painter, shortly abandoned the brush and canvas for ceramics, and for the greater part of his life he designed tiles and pottery. He was a friend of William Morris, and, within a certain circle, had been well known for years; and his new venture at so late a stage of life came as a surprise. *Joseph Vance* (1906) was both a remarkably good and a curiously old-fashioned piece of writing. Dickens and Thackeray were the comparisons which came instinctively to mind on the appearance of this discursive, irregular and lengthy story. As a

general description of De Morgan's method the term, "Early Victorian," which he resented, is apt and justifiable. These modern Victorian novels have all the appearance of having been written at haphazard for monthly publication, like the tales of Thackeray and Dickens. The names, the entire disregard of plot, the irrelevancies of matter, the optimistic, matter-of-fact absence of introspection, save the most elementary and superficial, the strain of pleasantly tempered sentiment, all take us back to the 'fifties and 'sixties of the last century. William De Morgan illustrates, therefore, nothing that is new: his true place is a volume on Victorian novelists. And in that volume *Joseph Vance*, and, with less emphasis, *It Never Can Happen Again* (1909), and *When Ghost Meets Ghost* (1914), should be named with honour. *Alice for Short* (1907), his second tale, reflects the first in slightly different terms with far less spontaneity of manner and less wealth of matter. *Somehow Good* (1908) is not so diffuse as his other tales, but its plot-idea, loss of memory due to shock in a London tube, is fantastic at first and becomes laboured later. *An Affair of Dishonour* (1910) is an historical romance that can add nothing to De Morgan's credit; and *A Likely Story* (1911) is the shortest, the most discursive and the least likely of his tales. Something might be made in another vein of the picture which speaks and relates its experiences, but in a conglomerate of *The Ring and the Book*, *Pendennis* and *David Copperfield* the whole story becomes incongruous.

In *Joseph Vance*, with its odd humours, caricatures, irrelevant excursions, and sprawling yet wonderfully faithful characterisation of the lower life of London De Morgan wrote a real book, the summary of a life's observation. In some degree he exhausted himself with his first venture: in no succeeding volume has he shown the same abundance of humour, whimsy, thought and wealth of character-drawing. It is chiefly as a painter of street and gutter life that he is successful; and, even so, his workpeople are of a past age, not modern artisans contesting problems inculcated by the mass meeting and the tutorial class.

The novel of street life and cockney dialect has not greatly flourished since the day of Dickens. The

romantic and the idealising tendency of Dickens' temperament led him to represent that life as more joyous than it actually is; and the truth of his dialect is, in the opinion of the best judges, more than questionable. Mr. Arthur Morrison's temper and method is wholly different. His *Tales of Mean Streets* (1894) is a book written in a spirit of harsh realism or grim humour. *A Child of the Jago* (1896) and *To London Town* (1899) are companion pictures of life in the east end of London. Mr. Morrison's strongest writing is to be found in his first book, which he has never surpassed. He there showed himself a discerning spectator of life in slums and mean streets. But he has since been led astray, by ingenuity in contriving the clever twist of incident, into writing detective stories, and it is a misfortune that he has not followed up the stronger and more truthful writing of his first book. Mr. William Somerset Maugham now writes chiefly for the stage, but in *Liza of Lambeth* (1897) he published a distinctive and striking novel of the London streets. Mr. Barry Pain and Mr. Pett Ridge are also to be named as writers who have studied the cockney character and write realistically and with humour.

The Cockney Dialect Novel.

If we turn to the youngest generation of writers who are engaged with the observation and the rendering of contemporary life in its myriad social phases, the number of the names and the wealth of the material offered for inspection compels us to do no more than brush by with a passing mention which is not intended to carry with it any slight or disparagement. Among the youngest are Mr. E. Temple Thurston, Mr. Hugh Walpole, Mr. Compton Mackenzie, author of the two striking novels, *Carnival* (1912) and *Sinister Street* (1913), and Mr. Oliver Onions.

An age of science (though science be the opposite of poetry) and mechanical invention has not destroyed the possibilities of romantic experience or romantic imagination. If, on the whole, the weight of intellectual power with the drama and the novel lies on the side of those writers who care most for an exact chronicle of the life of man as it is to-day, the writers of romance, or the realistic coloured by romance, are far from repre-

Joseph Conrad, b. 1857.

senting a subordinate group, and in the matter of style and literary gift Mr. Conrad, Mr. Hewlett and Mr. Hichens have no equals among authors who have been treated earlier in this chapter. Even the reader who is tempted to carp at Mr. Conrad's psychology will admit the beauty and the splendour of his style. And his mastery of our language is the more remarkable if it be remembered that he did not learn English till he was nearly twenty. Thereafter for twenty years Józef Konrad Korzeniowski sailed the seas on British craft; and at the age of thirty-eight no printed book stood to his credit. But during his years at sea he read French and English literature widely, evidently with the thought of becoming an author. *Almayer's Folly* was begun at sea, long carried about in manuscript, nourished in the imagination, and finished during a stay ashore. "For many years," writes Mr. Conrad, "he [Almayer] and the world of his story had been the companions of my imagination without, I hope, imparing my abilities to deal with the realities of sea life." Almayer's story was finished and published. Mr. Conrad abandoned the British Mercantile Marine and embarked on the profession of letters with a better knowledge of the sea than any English writer since Marryat, and a rich, glowing English style to which Marryat could make no pretence. The greater number of Mr. Conrad's novels and tales, and certainly the best of them, are drawn from his experience of life on the high seas, in strange lands, amid unfamiliar and exotic surroundings, on coral islands of the Pacific, among Malays, Africans, Chinese, and the strangely assorted rally of Europeans and Americans who go down to the sea in ships and fail to observe the wonders of the deep. *Almayer's Folly* (1895) narrates the tragedy of a Dutch trader whose Malay wife reverts to the ways of her people while his daughter runs away with a Malay chieftain. *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896) continues the story of Almayer; *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897) is a tale of life in the forecastle; *Tales of Unrest* (1898), which was crowned by the *Academy*, is a collection of short stories of wild or out-of-the-way life. And among the other volumes of short tales are *Youth* (1902), *Typhoon* (1903) and *'Twixt Land and Sea* (1912). *Lord Jim* (1900) is the most elaborate of Mr. Conrad's

studies of character. A young mate fails once in his dut y his mind is morbidly obsessed with the consciousness of failure, he hides himself and his disgrace among Malays of the Pacific islands and recovers his self-respect in the influence he gains over them. *Nostromo* (1904), with a scene laid in South America, again turns upon the problem of self-respect. In *Chance* (1914) Mr. Conrad, with a result not altogether happy, carries a part of his narrative away from the sea, and in this section of his tale is involved in a tangled psychology of a length unnecessary to the explication of the remainder of his story. The reversals and retracings of the plot are as circuitous as in the case of Lord Jim, and the reader gains less; for the relationship at sea of the captain, his wife and her vicious father, developed as a curious intensive drama, has not sufficient substance to support the verbose narration. And Mr. Conrad's mannerisms have begun to conquer him. *Under Western Eyes* (1911) is a picture of Russian political conspiracy as seen by the eyes of the Westerner who relates the story.

Although Mr. Conrad sets nearly all his tales in an atmosphere of romance and rough seafaring he is not merely the romantic chronicler. The bent of his genius leads him to involved psychological study, and his gift of style prompts him to elaborate descriptions of personality and scenery. The romance of adventure, as it was written by Scott, Stevenson and Dumas, he does not write. He blends with sea-faring experience the psychology and theory of fiction evolved by the author of *What Maisie Knew*, and the result is not seldom curious and incongruous. Like Henry James he has adopted the method of continuous exposition by the author's self and the principle of the point of view. These tendencies in his work are naturally more apparent in the longer novels than in the short stories in which he has not the same elbowroom. *Lord Jim*, *Under Western Eyes* and *Chance* are typical of intricate study of mental phenomena. The method adopted in each book is very similar. In *Lord Jim* the story opens with narrative in the third person by the author; then we turn to a long, indirect, zig-zag recital by a spectator of the hero's subsequent career. In *Under Western Eyes* the story is retold from a personal point of

view but abstracted from the manuscript of a character who plays a part in the tale. In *Chance* the point of view crosses and recrosses. The result, especially in *Lord Jim*, is a prolix complexity of mental analysis which it is difficult to believe could have any conscious or unconscious play in the mind of the mate of a crazy steamer plying the Indian Ocean. These bewildering mazes of introspection are incongruous with the environment and the characters of the tale. In a life of cultured leisure they might be credible, but not in a world of action. Further, Mr. Conrad's narrative can hardly be followed with pleasure, for he has no conception of the broad highway of the human heart. His love of beginning in the middle and catching up the tags of the past, while he meanders toward the future, is exasperatingly confusing. Ibsen often, in like manner, begins in the moment of crisis, but the development of the drama picks up the thread of the past with an unhesitating sureness and ease of movement. Mr. Conrad has no vestige of this art. He has disclaimed classification with the writers of adventurous romance, and asserted that he wishes to make us feel, think and hear. It may, however, be doubted whether these erratic leapings backward and forward represent the workings of any ordinary mind engaged with a single personality and his life-history. If we ask how we come to understand the hero of *Lord Jim*, the answer is—through the exegetical commentary of the author and his mouthpiece, Marlow. Though we are thus forced to piece the narrative together from a maze of digressive moods and impressions, the wonder is that we are continually conscious of touch with life, mystery and romance. The splendid colouring and the cadences of the style enthrall us; the mystery of life and the joy of youth flood the narrative. In Mr. Conrad's studies of the problems of the soul there are no psychological megrims, no morbid introspectivity. The spirit which giveth life is everywhere present in his novels.

From Henry James he has learned much; but the secret of form Mr. Conrad has never made his own. His longer tales are confused inextricably; and his short stories are wonderful impressions rather than *contes*. Nevertheless, of their kind there is hardly anything to

surpass them in English fiction; for in his short stories Mr. Conrad has less room for psychology and description, although his descriptive passages are still too frequent and obtrusive. Beauty of form these stories lack; but their style is a matter of continual astonishment when we remember that Mr. Conrad did not speak English till he was twenty. The slight evidences, which do appear, that the author is writing in an acquired tongue are but an added grace. 'Youth,' the story of a tempestuous voyage to the East in an unseaworthy vessel, 'The End of the Tether,' the story of a sea captain who hides his growing blindness behind the trustworthiness of a Malay servant and continues to steer his ship, 'Typhoon,' the sketch of a vessel struck by a typhoon, these and others are among the best of all short stories. The cadences, the richness, the descriptive power of the style, the halo of youth and romance lend to them a character unmatched. The English are a race of seamen, but no English writer who ever took pen in hand has painted a storm in mid-ocean like Mr. Conrad. The passage of 'Typhoon' which describes a vessel struggling for life in a wild welter of sky and sea is astonishing in its power, the rounded completeness of its phrasing and the aptness of the analogical pictures it summons in quick succession.

> "The motion of the ship was extravagant. Her lurches had an appalling helplessness: she pitched as if taking a header into a void, and seemed to find a wall to hit every time. When she rolled she fell on her side headlong, and she would be righted back by such a demolishing blow that Jukes felt her rolling as a clubbed man reels before he collapses. The gale howled and scuffled about gigantically in the darkness, as though the entire world were one black gully. At certain moments the air streamed against the ship as if sucked through a tunnel with a concentrated solid force of impact that seemed to lift her clean out of the water and keep her up for an instant with only a quiver running through her from end to end."

It is difficult to conceive writing better and more to the purpose than this. Its descriptive power holds the reader spellbound.

'Youth' can hardly be called a story. It is a pæan to youth and its conquest of adversity. A crazy old vessel sets sail with a cargo of coal for the east; she is buffeted by the waves and escapes a watery grave only to be gutted by fire. But in the memory of the young ship's officer the voyage was more glorious and wonderful than any he took in later life under happier circumstances.

> "O youth! The strength of it, the faith of it, the imagination of it. To me she was not an old rattle-trap carting about the world a lot of coal for a freight —to me she was the endeavour, the test, the trial of life. I think of her with pleasure, with affection, with regret, as you would think of some one dead you have loved. I shall never forget her."

And it is impossible not to quote one more passage from the wonderful story, a passage which illustrates the style of Mr. Conrad in another aspect, in his description of the spell that is laid upon man by the inscrutable beauty of the world into which he is thrust blindly to live. The young ship's officer of the story reaches the East at last, but in an open boat.

> "And this is how I see the East. I have seen its secret places and I have looked into its very soul; but now I see it always from a small boat, a high outline of mountains, blue and afar in the morning; like faint mist at noon; a jagged wall of purple at sunset. I have the feel of the oar in my hand, the vision of a scorching blue sea in my eyes. And I see a bay, a wide bay, smooth as glass and polished like ice, shimmering in the dark. . . . Suddenly a puff of wind, a puff faint and tepid and laden with strange odours of blossoms, of aromatic wood, comes out of the still night—the first sigh of the East on my face. That I can never forget. It was impalpable and enslaving, like a dream, like a whispered promise of mysterious delight."

Mr. Conrad is not among the greatly popular writers of the day; he is something more; for it is difficult to believe that the best of his work will be forgotten. The gift of the story-teller, inexhaustible imagination, a tire-

less invention and strong dramatic instinct, all these in joint company will fail to ensure lasting fame to an author who can write so as to be understood but not admired. And, contrariwise, nothing that has the seal of a noble and beautiful style upon it can ever utterly perish. The philosopher or the scientist is not dependent upon a style, that he may influence his own and succeeding generations: indubitably the creative artist, although he may achieve a temporary vogue without style, for the lack of this one thing is fated to an early oblivion. Many popular novelists of yester-year are now but unimportant names in the catalogue and index.

Popularity in measure pressed down and running over is never likely to fall to the lot of Mr. Conrad. He is wanting in just those qualities which would commend him to the reader who asks to be entertained, not illumined. His narrative moves slowly and uncertainly, the action interests him little, the motives of the actor much; he is lavishly, often quite unnecessarily descriptive of the characters and the scenes in which they move; and the best in his books—their style, their joy of living, their pervading consciousness of the mystery of man and that background of nature before which he plays his part—appeals only to the imagination responsive to these influences. The adjective romantic, if used of Mr. Conrad's tales, must be understood in a sense other than that in which we apply it to Scott or Dumas. His romanticism is not the romance of a stirring tale of adventure, but the romanticism of an imaginative and poetical vision of life, as intensely stirred by the dark and close-smelling forecastle as by the tropical splendour and blazing sunlight of the East Indies.

Frank Thomas Bullen, 1857–1915.

F. T. Bullen did not have the style, the imagination, the passion for involved psychology which characterise the genius of Mr. Conrad, but he wrote of sea life with experience, a native gift for expressing himself well, and he could paint scenes which he knew vividly and realistically. For fourteen years of his boyhood and youth he served on a whaler; and his first and best book, *The Cruise of the Cachalot* (1898), is a transcript from his early experiences. The

success of this venture led him to the writing of other tales of the sea; and of these may be named, *The Log of a Sea-waif* (1899), *With Christ at Sea* (1900), *A Whaleman's Wife* (1902) and *Told in the Dog Watches* (1910). These books are not striking or remarkable, but they give evidence of an observant eye and a power of writing in a strong, simple and wholesome manner.

John Masefield.

Mr. John Masefield, although he has since turned to other courses, also began as a writer of sea stories. *A Mainsail Haul* (1905) was a collection of short tales of the sea. *Lost Endeavour* (1910) and *Jim Davis* (1911) are tales of adventure in which incident counts for more than character. In the same class *Captain Margaret* (1908) is a more arresting volume, for a finely narrated story of broken love is worked into the romance. It is raised above the ordinary tale of adventure by its strong character-drawing and by the spirit of poetry which illuminates the narrative. And these are the redeeming features of Mr. Masefield's first true novel, *Multitude and Solitude* (1909), an otherwise exasperating piece of work, for the story breaks into two distinct parts which are only dove-tailed crudely and violently. In the earlier half of the book Mr. Masefield tells the story of a dramatist whose play fails, whose life is further embittered by the death of the woman he loves; in the latter half the hero is, by a mechanical collocation of incidents, engineered off to Africa to study sleeping sickness. Mr. Masefield's longest and most ambitious novel, *The Street of To-day* (1911), also suffers from the intolerable clumsiness of its construction. Lionel Heseltine returns to London from Africa, and mixing again in the society of dainty women realises that loneliness in bachelor chambers is not life. He marries, but only to have his wife leave him because he cannot give her what she expected. The first half of the tale is heavily overweighted with the discussion of social and political problems and the story moves slowly; the second half, in which we learn that Heseltine fails both as a husband and a magazine editor, is hurried through rapidly. It is evident that Mr. Masefield had not planned his work in either book. He is wanting in art; when he begins to write he does not know

what he is going to say; and his staccato, snipped style makes no pretence to be a pattern of good prose. In his novels, as in his verse, Mr. Masefield has perhaps come far short of what he yet may do. His work is breezy, full-blooded, sincere; it is also crude and violent. In depth of insight and in fidelity of observation he is a lesser novelist than many writers of the day; in *Multitude and Solitude* there is, on the other hand, a spirit of poetry which makes it a failure of more value than many a success.

Robert Smythe Hichens, b. 1864.

There are aspects in which the novels of Mr. Robert Hichens are not unlike those of Mr. Conrad. He combines elements of romance, of realism, and the study of motives, causes and mental phenomena. When a young man he came to London to become a student of the Royal College of Music; but by a happy inspiration he chose the moment when the æsthetic movement was at its height to publish a witty and spirited satire upon its extravagances. *The Green Carnation* (1894) was the book of the moment and a popular success. It deserved its success, for it was the most pointed satire of any length directed against the æsthetic movement. The epigrams and paradoxes of Esmé Amarinth are those of Wilde hardly veiled. "Everything that is true is inappropriate" has all the ring of Wilde's manner; and the length and breadth of the æsthetic moral philosophy is well summed-up in the remark of Lady Locke—"We are to aim at inducing a violent rash that all the world may stare at."

Thenceforward Mr. Hichens was committed to the path of literature, and, diverging from his first direction, the writing of satiric extravaganza, he turned to more thoughtful and serious work, till with the most subtle and psychologically intricate of his books, *A Spirit in Prison* (1908), he exhausted his powers, and his later volumes, despite the best efforts of the author, break down under the strain of trying to catch the former vigour and closeness of analysis. In *Bella Donna* (1909) the fantastic element of Mr. Hichens' imaginative faculty overpowers his sense of reality and proportion, and the narrative collapses in a painfully melodramatic effort to represent the glamour

of the Orient. But this is to anticipate, and to pass over a number of exceptionally strong and thoughtful novels.

The Green Carnation was followed by *An Imaginative Man* (1895), a study in morbid pathology and a satire upon the shams of modern life, and *The Folly of Eustace* (1896). But the curious and original *Flames* (1897), a story of spiritualistic phenomena and psychic influences, was the most remarkable of his earlier tales. *Felix* (1902) illustrates the *illusions perdues* of a young Englishman, who is fired with literary ambitions, after meeting with the tailor who once made trousers for Balzac. The book is partly a tale of the lost ideals of rose-white youth, and partly an indictment of literary and social life in London. This and *The Woman with the Fan* (1904), a well-constructed book, are, compared with the occultism of *Flames*, realistic novels of the common world. But it was between the years 1904 and 1908 that Mr. Hichens reached his best in craftsmanship, insight and concentration with the three long novels, *The Garden of Allah* (1904), *The Call of the Blood* (1906) and its sequel, *A Spirit in Prison*. In these novels, conscious that he was beginning to exhaust his store of observation of English social life, and anxious to study the psychology of simple, passionate and unsophisticated men and women, he carried his scene afield to Northern Africa and Sicily. *The Garden of Allah* has a double thread running through its pages—the fascination of the vast silences of the sandy desert and the spell of the Roman Catholic faith. Mr. Hichens shows himself an excellent topographical writer in these tales.

> " They were near Beni-Mora now. Its palms appeared far off, and in the midst of them a snow-white tower. The Sahara lay beyond and around it, rolling away from the foot of low, brown hills, that looked as if they had been covered with a soft powder of bronze. . . . In this pageant of the East she saw arise the naked soul of Africa ; no faded, gentle thing, fearful of being seen, fearful of being known and understood ; but a phenomenon vital, bold and gorgeous, like the sound of a trumpet pealing a great *réveillé*. As she looked on this flaming land laid fearlessly bare before her, disdaining the clothing of grass, plant and flower, of

stream and tree, displaying itself with an almost brazen insouciance, confident in its spacious power, and in its golden pride, her heart leaped up as if in answer to a deliberate appeal."

The desert in its influence upon the heroine of Mr. Hichens' story plays a part comparable to Egdon Heath in Mr. Hardy's *Return of the Native*. It governs the narrative and moulds the characters of those men and women who come in contact with it. Against the sombre colours of the desert is set the somewhat melodramatic love-story of an English girl and a renegade Russian monk. As Boris, the monk, hears the call of love and the wo ld, so in *The Call of the Blood* Maurice Delarey, half English, half Sicilian, is hurried by his passionate southern blood into faithlessness to his wife and a tragic end. But it is in the sequel, *A Spirit in Prison*, that Mr. Hichens gives us his finest and closest work as a student of the mind. A long novel, it is perfectly co-ordinated, and the development of the theme—the bondage of the spirit shielded by a lie—is used with extraordinary skill and power. *A Spirit in Prison* is a fine piece of writing, and immeasurably Mr. Hichens' most substantial work. *Bella Donna* represented a great falling off, and only too evidently betrayed weariness and laboured effort. In his attempt to reproduce the atmosphere of *The Garden of Allah*—the spell of the Orient—Mr. Hichens became so unbalanced as to suggest comparison with Ouida. *The Dweller on the Threshold* (1911) restored the scene to England, and reverted to the subject of psychic influence; but, compared with *Flames*, it was a brief and slight piece of writing. *The Fruitful Vine* (1911) is weaker than his best writing, but it is the one book of the last few years which does Mr. Hichens the least discredit. In *The Way of Ambition* (1913) he tells cleverly the story of a musical composer forced against his will into writing for success, and his consequent downfall. He has a thorough knowledge of his situations and the many types of people whom he introduces, but the characters are wire-drawn and wanting in true life-likeness.

Mr. Hichens' chief failing in his more ambitious novels is an absence of that humour which he possessed in

abundance when he wrote *The Green Carnation*. In later years he takes himself too seriously and coldly. In analysis of human character and motive an intellectual egotism and aloofness renders his characters chilling and unsympathetic. He cannot sink himself in the people of his imagination. Even in *A Spirit in Prison* his manner tends to be intellectually objective. On the other hand Mr. Hichens succeeds in uniting his narrative to the broader and more important issues of life and the moral workings of the universe. *Flames* exhibits the power of mind upon mind for evil; *The Call of the Blood* illustrates the forces of heredity and unconscious memory; *A Spirit in Prison* and *The Fruitful Vine* point the moral of the revenge exacted by circumstance for falsehood even in a good cause. These are motives patient of great dramatic treatment, and Mr. Hichens has the instincts of the dramatist. But his work is inexplicably unequal in its quality. *Felix* is slight in invention, thought and treatment compared with work that went before; *The Dweller on the Threshold* makes a surprisingly lame use of a subject—psychic influences—which the author had used already with far greater power in *Flames;* and *Bella Donna* drops to the grotesque when contrasted with *The Garden of Allah*. If Mr. Hichens had not reasserted himself with *The Fruitful Vine* it would be natural to say that he had completely written himself out in 1908, the year of his greatest, his most complex and his most convincing novel in the exposition of character—*A Spirit in Prison*. Among English novels written within this century this book, in its close analysis of character and motive, in the poetry of its background, and in the breadth with which Mr. Hichens outlines his moral drama, stands out as a noble and distinctive achievement.

Maurice Hewlett, b. 1861.

Mr. Maurice Hewlett finds his strongest inspiration in the past and in books; he is an historical romancer, but a romancer with qualifications. In his verse he has made peculiarly his own the reinterpretation of classical myth, and in prose he is equally identified with a distinctive and original sphere of work in his six or seven volumes of mediæval romance. Beside these, however, he has written miscellaneous prose and fiction

of an entirely different order. His prose books readily fall into four classes. *Earthwork out of Tuscany* (1895) and one or two other volumes are topographical; *The Forest Lovers* (1898), *Little Novels of Italy* (1899), *Richard Yea-and-Nay* (1900), *Brazenhead the Great* (1911) and *The Song of Renny* (1911) are romances of mediæval Europe; *The Fool Errant* (1905), *The Stooping Lady* (1907) and *Mrs. Lancelot* (1912) are mannered and preciose romances of love in the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries; the trilogy, *Half-way House* (1908), *The Open Country* (1909) and *Rest Harrow* (1910), is a comedy of modern life.

It was first with *The Forest Lovers*, a romance strikingly original in style, that Mr. Hewlett won recognition. The story of the wandering knight and the peasant girl is of less account than the wider conception of the book, an attempt to resuscitate and paint vividly the humour, the tragedy and the spectacle of the Middle Age. The exquisite poetry of the setting, the elaborate and closely-woven style of many colours win upon the reader. But beautiful as *The Forest Lovers* may be accounted as a poem, the sugared manner soon cloys, and the volume will scarcely bear re-reading. We admire it once as a special feat of skill in a difficult kind of work; but it is not a book to live with. In style *Richard Yea-and-Nay* is less ornate and inwoven; and Mr. Hewlett's imaginative re-creation of the character of Richard Cœur de Lion and the spirit of the Crusades illustrates his genuine historical faculty. The ground of nearly all his work is scholarship and historical instinct. *Brazenhead the Great* and *The Song of Renny* are romances not in any marked way differentiated from his earlier essays in the same manner. But his greatest success in this *genre* is in the short stories of the *Little Novels of Italy*, in the *New Canterbury Tales* (1901) and in *The Queen's Quair* (1904), that splendid historical painting of a later period. In historical romance Mr. Hewlett has done nothing else as simple, sincere and living as this sympathetic interpretation of Mary, Queen of Scots, and her tragedy. And, if sometimes a little overwrought and precious, several of the short tales of the other volumes, especially the exquisite 'Madonna of the Peach Tree,' could not in grace and sentiment be bettered. In these stories Mr. Hewlett

paints the landscape, the cities and the pageantry of the Middle Age with a realism and truth of colour which is both beautiful and convincing. The description of Padua in ' Ippolita in the Hills ' is an example of perfect writing in the combination of brevity with wealth of content.

> " Padua is a city set in meadows full of light ; it is well-spaced, plentifully watered, arcaded, green with gardens. The streets are like cloister-walks ; as in Lucca, the plane is the sacred tree, and next to that flag of green on a silver staff, the poplar shows the city blushful in the spring and thrilling all summer with the memory. It is a place of brick and marble, painted orange, brown, yellow and warm white, where every corner-stone and every twig is printed sharply on a sky of morning blue.
>
> 'Quivi le mura son fatte con arte
> Che parlano, e rispondono a i parlanti.'
>
> A tale of Padua should have the edge of a cut gem."

And all these tales are like stones beautifully cut and set.

Mr. Hewlett is not a full-blooded romancer. A pretty sentiment, a quaint turn of phrase, a delicate colouring of poetry and adventure, a hinted *voluptas* and a style thick-woven like old tapestry, these are the components of his romance. And he sometimes seeks to create an archaic atmosphere by the use of cheap artifices in style which Scott and Dumas had, in general, the good sense to avoid.

> " He saw a table, a chair, and a bowl full of white substance, stiff and glistening. ' Sit down and take your filling of it,' said Myrrha. Gervase put his fingers into the bowl and sucked the tips of them.
>
> " ' It is the same you had in your pocket,' he says ; then sat down and ate some of the stuff. It had a very sweet sharp taste and was pungent in the nose. He ate for a time, but sparingly."

In this short passage Mr. Hewlett tries to make the style suggest something other than modern English by a few little tricks which might well have been left. Not to write modern English is not necessarily to invest narrative

with a mediæval atmosphere. Mr. Hewlett writes "Take your filling" for "Eat your fill," he writes, "The same you had" for "The same as you had," and describes a smell as "pungent in" instead of "pungent to" the nose. From these little twists it is not a far road to the larding of the narrative with impossible mediæval oaths, the dressing of characters in *hosen* and *shoon*, and the rest of the romancer's stock-in-trade. If we are compelled, however, to cavil at minor points, the intrinsic beauty and art of these tales there is no disclaiming. They are aglow with the passion and pageantry of life.

As a painter of individual characters Mr. Hewlett has done better work in his romances of a later historical epoch. *The Stooping Lady* is, whether consciously or unconsciously, so bare-facedly written in Meredithese that we are left in doubt whether this is the sincere admiration of imitation or parody. But in *Mrs. Lancelot* Mr. Hewlett writes independently and gives life to his characters. Mrs. Lancelot and the men who play a part in her story, the Prime Minister, her husband, her poet-lover are creatures of flesh and blood. Poetry, breathing life, and the subtle study of the clash of character with character all mark *Mrs. Lancelot* as, in truth and realism, Mr. Hewlett's best book. The chief characters, historical and fictitious, of this tale are re-introduced in *Bendish* (1913), a story told in the same mannered and deliberate way. As fiction the book is less successful, for the historical figures consort ill with the fictitious. It would have been better to give Bendish his name in history—Byron.

The three comedies of modern life, *Half-way House*, *The Open Country* and *Rest Harrow* show that Mr. Hewlett can desert historical romance and write comedy in narrative of the present time. But apart from the single character of Senhouse, gentleman vagabond, travelling with cart, tent and pony, these comedies would be tame and featureless. Senhouse is the making of the trilogy, and one of the most attractive personalities in modern fiction. For the rest Mr. Hewlett does not achieve anything which Meredith and Henry James have not done better before him. His comedies move stiffly and awkwardly, and do not suggest a source in the experience of a clear and eager observer of common life.

Mr. Hewlett's prose, like his verse, is the work of a scholar, a student, a man of letters, but it is wanting in naturalness. The marks of chisel and plane and the measurements of the foot-rule are left too plainly upon it. The supreme test of the novelist's art is its closeness to ordinary human nature; and, judged by this test, Mr. Hewlett betrays serious limitations. Nevertheless his mastery of style, his literary allusiveness, the glow of romance with which he invests his narrative, and his fine historical sense, render it impossible to exclude him from any half-dozen of the first chosen from English writers to-day.

Two other novelists, gifted with a strong historical sense, may here be mentioned briefly, Sir Henry Newbolt, the poet, and Robert Hugh Benson. These two writers use the historical setting of their tales to carry a moral and religious lesson; for Mr. Hewlett the past is no more than a pageant and a poem. Sir Henry Newbolt's first prose-book, *Taken from the Enemy* (1892), is an unpretentious story of a plot hatched in England to liberate Napoleon from St. Helena, and its failure caused by the death of the Emperor just before the plot is consummated. Fourteen years passed before he published a second novel, *The Old Country* (1906); and this was followed by *The New June* (1909) and *The Twymans* (1911). The three are bound together by their single theme—the continuity of history. *The Old Country* carries an epigraph from Sir Thomas Browne, beginning, "In Eternity there is no distinction of Tenses"; and the romance, based upon the translation of a modern man into fourteenth-century England, is a tractate upon the unchanging nature of men's ideals and hopes, despite changes in the externals of life. Sir Henry Newbolt is conservative in his sympathies, and believes with one of the characters of his romance that "man's highest hope can be nothing if it be not itself a memory." *The New June* is another romance of mediæval England, and an exposition of the same creed. *The Twymans*, although a tale of the present day, is one more illustration of his historic faith. It relates the fortunes of his hero in a public school and at the university; and the tale is

Sir Henry John Newbolt, b. 1862.

permeated with the belief that the best moral instincts of the English race are bound up with the noble tradition of corporate life at school and college. In simple and good English, in a vein of poetry, as we might expect, these romances do not fail; but Sir Henry Newbolt is no story-teller, his plots are of the slightest, their development confused and uncertain, and his characters are thinly sketched. His range of thought is so limited, his treatment of his themes often so jejune, that, despite his reverence for style and his sense of literary responsibility, in prose he goes no further than in verse. He hardly ever writes to kindle the imagination.

Robert Hugh Benson, 1871–1914.

R. H. Benson had powers of imagination, mystical insight and a fine style, and since his conversion to the Church of Rome he assiduously devoted these gifts to her service. Besides writing devotional and religious works, in novels such as *By What Authority* (1904) and *The Queen's Tragedy* (1906), he combated the Protestant view of history. He had the instinct of the scholar and historian and the gift of style. In the vigour of his imagination and in native literary genius he stood above his brothers, Mr. E. F. Benson and Mr. A. C. Benson; but the dialectician and the proselytizer overpowered the artist and often led him into exaggeration and sensationalism. Had his mind and imagination been set free he might have written prose-fiction of wider range and greater distinction.

Anthony Hope, b. 1863.

Anthony Hope (Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins) may, perhaps, be placed with the romantic writers, for, though few have surpassed him in the delineation of modern social life, he can scarcely be counted with the realists in the stricter sense, and it was first as a writer of undiluted romance that he won fame. Before he had resigned his practice at the Bar he published his first novel, *A Man of Mark* (1890); but it was not till he wrote the *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894), the romance of a purely imaginary principality in South Germany, that he became a popular author. In the same year he produced his fascinating *Dolly Dialogues*, presenting the conversations of a lady with the man she has jilted. Wit,

in the better sense of that word, Anthony Hope does not possess, but he has a singularly light and deft touch; and these dialogues illustrate his power to observe and render back the inconsequent phases and manners of social life. It is in this faculty that Anthony Hope need fear no rival among his contemporaries. For over twenty years he has written stories often remote from every-day life, but he has shown a continuous tendency to approximate to things as they are. *The God in the Car* (1894) contains skilful dialogue and relates the not very credible fortunes of a company promoter in South Africa. *Rupert of Hentzau* (1898) continued the artificial romance of *The Prisoner of Zenda.* In the rapid succession of his later novels, including, among others, *The Intrusions of Peggy* (1902) and *The Indiscretion of the Duchess* (1904) Anthony Hope never fails in skilful technique, apt dialogue and a ready ease in handling his characters, which make him an attractive and popular writer with something yet in reserve. In *Quisanté* (1900) he showed his powers to the best advantage. Here he essayed to study realistically the interplay of opposed characters. Quisanté, the rough-grained, half-cultured political adventurer has little to recommend him save great intellectual powers and a commanding will. A lady of aristocratic birth and gentle nurture, fascinated by his personality, marries him, only to discover the painful incongruity of her position. The plot-idea is more ambitious than in the earlier tales; and, although he never ceases to be the light-hearted and graceful entertainer, Anthony Hope gradually inclines to produce an approximation to the problem novel. *Mrs. Maxon Protests* (1911) is an example in point. The vivacious Mrs. Maxon discovers the ailment of incompatibility with her husband. She leaves him, and later unites her lot with that of another man, only to meet with fresh disillusions; and in the conclusion nothing is concluded save that Mrs. Maxon realises there are more things than were dreamed of in her philosophy of emancipation. The whole book is cleverly conceived and brilliantly written.

If Anthony Hope has often been satisfied merely to entertain, he is an excellent *raconteur* and a master of sparkling dialogue. His style is both easy and good,

his touch is graceful and light, he has a wholesome cleanliness in thought and subject matter. He has never attempted great things; but he is one of the best living painters of the lighter side of English social life.

Anthony Hope, although he does not take himself with the solemn earnestness of many of his countrymen is unmistakably English in his outlook upon life. Mr. W. J. Locke, who shares certain of Anthony Hope's gifts as a writer, is as emphatically French in temper. His irony, his lack of solemnity, the *nuance* of his sceptical satire belong to the genius of a people which has produced a M. Anatole France. Sir Marcus Ordeyne, the virtuoso, the book-collector, the cultured recluse and ironic philosopher, might conceivably have been imagined by the greatest of living French writers. Mr. Locke's temper is un-English; he knows the French and their language almost as a native, and he delights to place the scenes of his tales in France.

William John Locke, b. 1863.

For ten years or more he wrote novels without drawing attention to himself, nor was his early work worthy of remark, save as an average example of good melodrama. The generous hero takes upon himself the sins of others and lives a dilapidated, a vagrant and a Bohemian life —this is the common formula, and Mr. Locke does not desert it in his later and better books. For in the reserves of melodrama Mr. Locke continues to dwell. He is not the serious student of work-a-day life; and were it not for his admirable style, his delicate irony, his insouciant gaiety, his tales would scarcely call for mention. But Mr. Locke is of interest among English writers as the best example of French irony translated to these shores. The inconsequence of his narrative and the looseness of his form are purely English.

Before the appearance of *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne* (1905) he had written eight books. Typical of these early melodramas are *At the Gate of Samaria* (1895), *Idols* (1899) and *Where Love Is* (1903). It was not, however, till he wrote the first-named book that he gave distinctive proof of literary power; and in dramatised form the novel met with great success. From a writer almost unknown he became one of the most popular and best-selling authors

of the day. The substance of his narratives still remained as far from reality as in his early melodramas; but the excellence of his style, his wit and urbane irony conspire to seduce our interest in the characters of his tales and release us from the necessity of judging his truth to nature. For, despite his rare literary gifts, Mr. Locke has little sense of responsibility and no sincerity of intention. As a reaction against the commonplace world he enjoys writing of *la vie de Bohème;* and he is a skilled entertainer, for he can hold our interest in his characters from moment to moment and afford to neglect his story. The situation in *The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne* is whimsical and wholly improbable, but it is, at the least, amusing. Sir Marcus Ordeyne, baronet and literary recluse, picks up in the streets of London Carlotta, who has escaped from a harem in Alexandretta.

Mr. Locke followed *Marcus Ordeyne* with his masterwork, *The Beloved Vagabond* (1906), slight, but one of the most delightful and charming essays in fiction of recent years. The old formula of the man unfairly ostracised by society is used, and the shabby, dirty, drunken, happy-go-lucky, erudite vagabond, Berzélias Nibbidad Paragot, is a figure of contrasts, genius, wisdom and hopeless moral delinquency, as strange as Falstaff's self; and every right-minded person will feel that the world has need not only of its sober, righteous and industrious citizens, but also of its Falstaffs and Paragots. The story of Paragot's vagrancy with Asticot, the boy, and Blanquette de Veau, the peasant girl, soon fades from the memory; the tale is nought, but the personality of the whimsical, great-hearted, Quixotic tramp is unforgettable. It matters little whether Paragot might or might not have been: in the kingdom of fanciful imagination he is a notable figure.

Unfortunately Mr. Locke has written nothing since so good. His humour and jesting irony have never again been so companionable. His books have always been entertaining; but fancifulness has become a strain and a labour; his readiness has begun to fail him. The incidents which go to the making of *Septimus* (1909) are the same, and the plot, such as it is, is adopted with the necessary modifications from *The Beloved Vagabond;* but invention is weaker and the characters want the reality

of those in the earlier book. *Septimus* reads like a tale made by rote for serial publication, the form in which it first appeared. *Simon the Jester* (1910), with its loves of the man condemned by the doctors to an early death and of the woman trainer of wild beasts, is riotous extravaganza. *The Glory of Clementina Wing* (1911) is better, and Clementina, the disillusioned, untidy Bohemian artist of genius is one of the most sincere and credible of Mr. Locke's characterisations. *The Joyous Adventures of Aristide Pujol* (1912) scarcely calls for mention save as an excellent example of picaresque romance in modern times; *Stella Maris* (1913), which has for theme the relationship of the adult and the child, is washed in sentimentality; *The Fortunate Youth* (1914) is an extravagant tale of rise to success.

Mr. Locke was once capable of better things than he has ever done. His style is a delight; he has wit, culture, a wide knowledge of human life and human types in different parts of the world. But he has chosen the less excellent way of popularity. And his invention is weak: his plots are monotonous and his characters unreal. Style, a caustic irony and that kind of nimble fancy which produces good farcical opera are his native gifts.

Alfred Ollivant, b. 1874.

Alfred Ollivant is one of that group of English writers, increasing each decade, whose genius is recognised in the United States before they are much heard of in their native country. *Owd Bob*, published in 1898, waited nearly ten years before its striking power was recognised in England, although in an earlier and less finished form, as *Bob, Son of Battle*, it had long been accepted by American readers and critics as one of the strongest and most original novels of recent times. To say of *Owd Bob* that it is the best story of canine life ever written does not debar us from adding that it is also but little behind Mr. Hardy in its pictures of rough life and homespun character. It is a work of sincere and sympathetic observation, of splendid imagination and of poetical genius. From Dr. John Brown's *Rab and his Friends* (1858), through Bret Harte to Jack London, the story of the dog has gone its way; but all canine tales that went before are secondary to the story of Owd Bob,

the grey dog of Kenmuir. In its mingling of tenderness, pathos and strength, in its poetry, in its nervous and vigorous style the book is immediately distinguished from the ordinary novel of the day. Shepherds, sheep-dogs and grey fells—these are the material of Mr. Ollivant's story, and with these he writes his epic of the tail-less tyke that sinned the unforgivable sin of sheep-murder, of M'Adam, his puny, vindictive little master, and of the gentle and chivalrous grey dog who fought the black killer in the wide silence of the moors. There is a fine dramatic sequence in the events, beauty in the passages descriptive of nature; and in the natural force with which he writes dialect Mr. Ollivant shows a rare literary talent. As a first novel it is a more than remarkable piece of work; and this strong book was written by a young man physically injured and lying in pain.

It was to be expected that Mr. Ollivant should continue with another dog story, and *Danny* (1902) appeared after four years, only to be withdrawn and published in the following year in a revised form. Even in its better dress *Danny* is disappointingly inferior to *Owd Bob;* the story is slight and conventional, and concerns human beings more than the canine hero. It is not, like its predecessor, an independent and original book. There is some exquisite writing, and passages of true and tender pathos; but whereas in *Owd Bob* the glow of imagination made the whole more than the parts, we remember the second story by excerpts rather than as a whole.

After this Mr. Ollivant began to experiment, and each successive book has been a trial of skill in an entirely different field. *The Redcoat Captain* (1907), written in a curious, staccato baby-language, suggests a nonsense-book upon a first reading of its opening pages. It is, in truth, a thoughtful and often very beautiful allegory of life's meaning. It is the

> " only one Story, and it is the best story in the world; but it is not finished yet, and never will be.
>
> " And this story grows better and better all the time, which is how we know it from the written stories that we read.
>
> . . . . . .

"For no story really ends sadly for the very good reason that it can't.

"For Love is Love, and in the end of all Love must win."

Mr. Ollivant wrote in a not dissimilar staccato manner his next book, *The Gentleman* (1908), a story of England in 1805 and an attempt to abduct Nelson. The romance flows swiftly through a series of kaleidoscopic scenes of war, peril and bloodshed. *The Taming of John Blunt* (1911) is the least distinctive and individual of Mr. Ollivant's books. The unconventional wanderer, who is by hypothesis a gentleman, spasmodically a man of letters, constitutionally a Socialist, and his experiences with well-bred ladies who are at first a little alarmed by his uncouth dress and talk, is by no means a new situation. John Blunt is cousin to Mr. Hewlett's Senhouse, and in melodrama he would not always be an incongruous figure. Far better is *The Royal Road* (1912), in which, once again, Mr. Ollivant entirely changes his *milieu* and paints the life of the working classes in the mean streets of London. The book is a signal example of the author's versatility, for both in humour and truthfulness he rivals Mr. Arthur Morrison and Mr. Pett Ridge on their own ground.

The long interval of silence which followed Mr. Ollivant's first book suggested that he was to be known only by one volume. But since 1907 he has continued to write, not rapidly, yet continuously, and he has refused to repeat himself. In each tale he has chosen different settings and characters. Fortunately or unfortunately, however, his first book has overshadowed the others. None of his later novels has been as independent, original, powerful and dramatic; and his name will always be associated with the prose epic of the tail-less tyke and the brave yet gentle grey dog of Kenmuir.

The novel is patient and long-suffering; like a good traveller it adapts itself to circumstance, and in every place is soon at home. Whatever the changes in fashion it must endure; and it wears the clothes of one season as readily as another. Of all forms of the literary art it is the most vulnerable and the least able to defend itself against unfair attacks or prying inquisitiveness. It is easy for the poet, the essayist, the journalist, the critic

to guard against the *ennui* of his leisure by writing and publishing an occasional novel. There are thus many novels, of greater or less merit, written by those who are not by profession novelists, novels which can be classed under no distinctive heading; they are by turns romantic, realistic, didactic, fantastic, grotesque, brilliant and dull. But the novel, like every work of man's hands, is exacting; and the great novels have been written by men who were first novelists and afterwards poets, essayists or leisured men about town. It will not, however, be out of place to note more briefly the work in fiction of a few modern writers who do not treat the novel as the occupation of a lifetime. And among writers of this class are naturally to be named Mr. G. S. Street, Mr. Hilaire Belloc, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, Saki and Mr. E. V. Lucas.

George Slythe Street, b. 1867.

Mr. G. S. Street is best described as a man of letters. He was a contributor to Henley's *National Observer* and a more than ordinarily good writer of that type of essay known as "middles." Mr. Street's essays, in their urbanity, readableness and in the wide knowledge of good literature they display are among the best of our day. He has collected a number in *Miniatures and Moods* (1893), *Quales Ego* (1896), *Some Notes of a Struggling Genius* (1898), *People and Questions* (1910) and *On Money and Other Matters* (1914). In *The Autobiography of a Boy* (1894) he wrote a moderately successful satire upon the æstheticism of Wilde and his followers. In 1905 his comedy, *Great Friends*, was produced by the Stage Society. And upon the death of Mr. Brookfield in 1913 he was appointed to be an Examiner of Plays. He has also written short stories and two novels. Mr. Street is therefore versatile and a writer of parts. *The Wise and the Wayward* (1897), his first novel, was a satire upon those useless members of society who dally ignobly with life. *The Trials of the Bantocks* (1900), his second novel, is again sustained satire, and modelled upon the pattern of Thackeray's *Snob Papers*. The Bantocks are a family typical of middle-class English snobbery, and the trials they endure are the severe shocks their snobbishness receives. Thackeray's *Snob Papers* grow sometimes monotonous; of Mr. Street's book it may be

said that the vigour and humour of his satire hardly falter for a page. But Mr. Street is an essayist rather than a consecutive writer; and his only book which may fairly be called a novel, *The Wise and the Wayward*, is one of his least successful efforts. He has style, satirical humour and the genius of the born critic, and these stand him in good stead in the miscellaneous essays and in *The Trials of the Bantocks*, where he is at his best.

Hilaire Belloc, b. 1870.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc is with Mr. Street one of the most vigorous and effective of our living satirists; and Mr. Belloc is the more imaginative, the more witty and the more purposeful satirist of the two. His first novel of any length, *Emmanuel Burden* (1904), satirises aspects of British commercial enterprise, religious polemics, newspaper syndicates and other topical matters. The make-believe, the pretence of unconsciousness in implication, the brevity and terseness of the satiric thrusts often recall the manner of Swift. *Mr. Clutterbuck's Election* (1908) and *A Change in the Cabinet* (1909) are novels of the same order, save that they introduce a larger element of political satire. These three books, however, belong to the story of satirical writing rather than that of the true novel. Mr. Belloc is one of the few writers of the day who can use the weapon of satire without laboured clumsiness. The heavy bludgeon is not always out of place, but it must yield to skilful fence with the rapier. In this relationship it is natural to connect the names of Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton. The latter is diffuse, and this in satire is almost always crippling; but he is sometimes the more original and unexpected of the two writers. On the other hand Mr. Belloc has a conciseness and a lucidity of style in which Mr. Chesterton is generally to seek; and it is this which lends an individuality, a grace, a charm to books like the ever-delightful *Path to Rome* (1902), to his essays, his topographical and historical writings.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton only claims consideration as a novelist incidentally. He is other things first; for the most part a journalist, witty, paradoxical, didactic, in an age of indifference and scepticism preaching with whole-hearted enthusiasm the Catholic Faith as it is understood

in a certain section of the Church of England, asserting that only for the gullible and credulous is it possible to be sceptics, denouncing asceticism and the mortification of the flesh, protesting the joy of life, will we only accept and live it. Further, with all his whimsies, he is a critic of insight and illumination, as witness his *Charles Dickens* (1906), his brilliant essay introductory to a selection from Thackeray, his miscellaneous essays collected in *Heretics* (1905), *Orthodoxy* (1908) and other volumes. Mr. Chesterton's work is varied, and it is nearly all occasional in character—detached essays and brief books on topical, religious and literary subjects—in other words it is journalism, but journalism scintillating with paradoxical witticisms. The only fault of Mr. Chesterton's method is that his paradoxes tend to become mechanical and stereotyped. We are startled into attention when we read of the " boisterous masculinity " of Jane Austen, but the trick repeated, like a familiar drug, loses its power. As anyone can, after a kind, learn to write couplets in the manner of Pope, so anyone, after a kind, can learn to write paradoxes in the manner of Mr. G. K. Chesterton.

G. K. Chesterton, b. 1874.

His natural habitat is Fleet Street, his proper work the essay or sketch written hurriedly against time ; and those of his books which may be loosely described as novels differ little from amusing and satirical journalistic essays thrown into loose narrative form. They are frolics and excursions into satiric and didactic fantasy. *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1903) is a whimsical nonsense book, the story of a king at Notting Hill who drives in his blue omnibus. *The Man Who was Thursday* (1907) is an extravaganza, too long for its subject, of an anarchist council who discover themselves to be police in disguise. The implication—the ease with which men abet each other in hypocrisies—is obvious. *The Ball and the Cross* (1910) is a disjointed fantasy illustrative of faith and disbelief. *Manalive* (1912), with a mingling of the Chestertonian manner, is nearer to life and a little less whimsical.

In his novels Mr. Chesterton is little occupied with the actual and the probable. To render things as they are and probe the mysteries of character in conflict with the circumstances of life is not his purpose, but to preach

a religious optimism and tittilate the intellect with a play of words and whimsical ideas. With the essay and the journalistic "middle" he is at home: his tales are, on the whole, more tiresome than his other books.

"Saki," 1870–1916.

Hector Munro ("Saki") was also an essayist, satirist and writer of fantasies. He contributed short and humorous sketches to the papers, which were collected in *Reginald* (1904), *Reginald in Russia* (1910) and *The Chronicles of Clovis* (1912). These sketches have wit and point, and the humour is that of a thoughtful man. His single novel resting upon the study of character is *Mrs. Elmsley* (1911). Hector Munro was both a man of thought and of literary talent; but *Mrs. Elmsley* is not a good novel. In workmanship it is not unlike the manner of another novelist who comes from the north of England, Mr. Allan Monkhouse;[1] and in the case of either writer narrative is a little laboured, and the dialogue is either detached from the characters or permeated with the theories and thoughts of the author. In *Mrs. Elmsley* the affairs of a mill in a northern town, a lawsuit and a divorce are needlessly interrupted by discussions upon pictures, music, Nietzche. It is conscientious and sincere work, but it fails in construction and vitality. *When William Came* (1913), a fanciful and bitter satire upon the apathy of England in the matter of national defence, is a strong piece of writing, but its interest is not that of the novel which studies the experiences of common life. Hector Munro was by instinct a humorist and satirist; his essays and short sketches sparkle with a wit that is pregnant and illuminative; in the sphere of the legitimate novel, though he wrote better than many, he was unable to make full use of his natural talents.

E. V. Lucas, b. 1868.

Mr. E. V. Lucas, as a novelist, is likewise a man of one book, the realistic and, at the same time, quaint, charming and witty *Over Bemerton's* (1908). The charm of the book lies in its aimless digressions; narrative is nothing; nevertheless the characters are lightly but firmly sketched.

[1] Allan Monkhouse: *A Deliverance* (1893); *Love in a Life* (1903); *Dying Fires* (1912).

The Irish novel, it has been pointed out in another chapter, has little relationship with the Celtic Revival, and, indeed, presents no marked and distinctive features which diversify it from the contemporary novel as it is written in England. Nor, again, has Ireland within recent years produced any work of note in fiction, no writing that may definitely be placed with that of Carleton, Lever and Lover, whatever may be the faults of exaggeration and melodrama in the earlier Irish novelists. There are but few now who call for mention—Canon Sheehan, Mr. Stephen Gwynn, ' G. A. Birmingham ' and Mr. James Stephens. And Mr. Gwynn is a critic, a miscellaneous writer, a Nationalist in politics, before he is a novelist. His few novels, including *The Repentance of a Private Secretary* (1898) and *The Old Knowledge* (1901) call for no special remark. Mr. Gwynn is deservedly better known as an essayist, editor, critic, topographical and political writer. Nor is it possible to speak in detail of the many novels of the popular ' G. A. Birmingham ' (Canon James Owen Hannay), who began by writing ecclesiastical books under his own name, before he adopted a pseudonym and wrote in rapid succession a series of high-spirited, humorous, inventive and resourceful novels—among them *Benedict Kavanagh* (1906), *Spanish Gold* (1908), *Lalage's Lovers* (1911) and *The Red Hand of Ulster* (1912). Canon Hannay is a competent writer, but his chief purpose is to entertain, and as a novelist he represents no literary aim or idealism.

Stephen Gwynn, b. 1864.

G. A. Birmingham, b. 1865.

A better literary quality and greater personal charm is inherent in the novels of Canon Sheehan, who won fame as an author late in life. His first book did not appear till he was forty-three years old. Before this he had worked as a curate, first in England, but later and for the most part in Ireland. In 1895 he became parish priest of Doneraile, and in 1905 Canon of Cloyne. In recognition of the services his writings had rendered to religion the Pope conferred on him the degree of D.D. in 1903.

Canon P. A. Sheehan, 1852–1913.

To the greater number of his readers Canon Sheehan

is known as the author of *My New Curate* (1899), which first gave proof of his power as a story-teller and his command of a clear and attractive English style. But, beside this and other tales of simple Irish life, he essayed authorship in several different fields. *The Triumph of Failure* (1899), a Roman Catholic *apologia* cast in the form of a story, remained a favourite book with Canon Sheehan himself. *The Queen's Fillet* (1911) was an historical romance constructed upon the accepted patterns. In *Miriam Lucas* (1912) he abandoned his native Ireland and lost his touch with reality. *Under the Cedars and the Stars* (1903) and *Parerga* (1908) are two volumes of discursive essays by a writer gifted with a style and a sufficient body of ideas to hold the reader.

But the charm of Canon Sheehan's writing is to be found in the novel with which his name is associated, *My New Curate*, and its successors in kind, *Luke Delmege* (1901), *Glenanaar* (1905) and *The Blindness of Dr. Grey* (1909). In these tales he wrote of the life he knew well, the parish priests and curates and peasantry of Ireland. The stories are told and the characters delineated with a humour and an air of cultured and reflective ease which lend them a peculiar charm. In these novels there is no writing of note or importance; the characterisation is good without being vivid; but the urbane humour and excellent style raise them above ordinary books of the day.

James Stephens, b. 1882.

Mr. James Stephens was discovered for a poet and rescued from the office typewriter by A. E., and when he is writing prose it is the poet with the dashing, careless, happy-go-lucky, Spartan philosophy of life, the poet of *Insurrections* and *The Hill of Vision*, who wins the day. *The Crock of Gold* (1912) is written in prose, but it is a poetic fantasy as much as Meredith's *Shaving of Shagpat*, save that the humour is almost too riotous and abundant for poetic fantasy. It is pure fancy, a fairy-tale for grown-up people, introducing a philosopher dwelling among the pine woods, his shrew of a wife, Leprecauns, Pan, Angus Óg, god of joy and love, beasts and insects, all speaking in the Irish idiom. Mr. Stephens has a native gift of style, a fine instinct for the choice of

the right word, his pages are rich in epigrammatic reflections upon life; but perhaps the most striking characteristic of *The Crock of Gold* is the abundant and varied wealth of his imagination. The same reckless imagination, half-cynical yet generous humour, give a distinguishing character to the storiettes and impressionistic sketches of men, women and children in *Here are Ladies* (1913). *The Charwoman's Daughter* (1912) was, perhaps, written earlier than the other two, for it is a less original book, although it shows that Mr. Stephens can write a realistic tale of life among the Dublin poor. Like all his attempts at story-telling it is no more than a sketch, and he sometimes forgets that the novelist is not the essayist. But it is a sincere and sympathetic piece of writing. *The Crock of Gold* is, however, Mr. Stephens's most distinctive achievement hitherto in imagination and poetry, more original even than his verse; and it yet remains to be seen whether time will or will not betray the high promise of that book.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN NOVELISTS

Mrs. Humphry Ward—'Olive Schreiner'—'Sarah Grand'—'George Egerton'—'Iota'—Elizabeth Robins—May Sinclair—M. P. Willcocks—Beatrice Harraden—'Lucas Malet'—'John Oliver Hobbes'—Mary Coleridge—'Elizabeth'—Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler—Lady Ritchie—M. L. Woods—'John Strange Winter'—W. K. Clifford—Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick—Netta Syrett—Una L. Silberrad—Ethel Sidgwick—Jane Barlow—Katharine Tynan—Nora Hopper—'Somerville and Ross'—'Ouida'—M. E. Braddon—Marie Corelli.

As early as the beginnings of human speech the impulse to story-telling must have come strongly upon man, and fiction has been written since the earliest stages of any script; but the novel, as we understand that word to-day, is a literary form of comparatively recent growth. In England we may date it from the eighteenth century. Fiction in plenty had been written and printed before that time; but the consecutive life that can be traced from the work of Defoe to our own day is a growth in itself. Defoe's novels, it may be, were a growth from the womb of the picaresque romance, but the child grew under a new nurture and the conditions of a more stable and ordered society. His books were no longer the fantasy, the chronicle romance or the short *conte:* they were that kind of fiction we now define by the epithet realistic. And from Defoe to the date of the *Sentimental Journey* all things were added to the novel: little has since been done save the constant perfecting of its machinery. In fifty years the working principle was set and established; and all changes since have been little more than modifications or adaptations of the standard pattern to new conditions.

As soon as the novel of the eighteenth century won its right of way the path was followed by an ever increasing company of women writers, who found that here they could compete on more equal terms with men than in

any other form of the literary art. With the novel, at least, a few women have challenged the higher ranges attained by men. Sarah Fielding, Mrs. Haywood, Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. Inchbald, Hannah Moore are still remembered by name, and by the few their books are read. At the close of the eighteenth century Frances Burney and Miss Edgeworth did better work, though they fell far behind Jane Austen, incomparably the greatest woman novelist England has produced. It is needless further to multiply names and instances; for novels written by women fall faster than autumn leaves in Vallombrosa. After Jane Austen the three greatest names in English dction are Emily and Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot.

And these names point a moral. One of the first tendencies in feminine fiction was the projection of fiomestic and social interest, the emphasis upon the importance of small details in the common round of life. In a few women writers, Mrs. Radcliffe for example, the tendency to romance appeared, but as woman's life is, in general, less adventurous than that of men, so the romantic incident, love apart, has less play in feminine fiction. And this was all to the good; for it emphasised what human nature gladly forgets on the slightest provocation—the enormous importance of the insignificant. But with the Brontë sisters and George Eliot a change came over the face of things. On the one hand passionate earnestness and a franker realism and on the other an obsession with intellectualism were emphasised as they had never been. These tendencies have largely moulded the later courses of novel writing by women; and not infrequently for evil. Ethical propagandism, abstract intellectualism, debate upon economic, religious and sexual questions, strenuous realism (not always with sufficient knowledge of life), have often warred against the things that are more excellent. Jane Austen had no message to deliver, but the impersonal truthfulness of her painting of life shows us more that is of permanent value to ourselves than all the intellectual labour of George Eliot and many of the later women novelists.

But, for good or ill, the argumentative novel by women, trom the level of Olive Schreiner, Sarah Grand and Mrs. Humphry Ward to that of Miss Marie Corelli, is with us.

For over a quarter of a century Mrs. Humphry Ward has issued to her hundreds of thousands of readers in England and America her stately sequence of intellectual novels, and still the armies who support the circulating libraries consume unsatiated a fiction which treats the range of modern life, its religious difficulties, its questions, social, political, moral, with a thorough and laborious exactness not always found in works sociological, theological, moral, addressing themselves only to the reader acquainted with the technicalities of the subject and making no profession to engage the lighter-minded. The subject matter of *Robert Elsmere* (1888), *David Grieve* (1892) and *Marcella* (1894), divested of the unnecessary accompaniment of a story would not have sold in tens against the thousands actually reached in circulation. Nevertheless, though Mrs. Humphry Ward has skill in developing a story, hardly anyone will contend that she has a happy gift of mixing her heavier matter with a narrative thrilling and dramatic, which deceives the unwary reader into a belief that he is interested, till he finds the moral, like the advertisement, administered at the end. There is no lightness in her touch, no graces, no rapidity of movement; her intellect, like that of George Eliot, works slowly and laboriously, and, like George Eliot, she is serious-minded. In her intense earnestness, her depressing seriousness and her total lack of humour lies the secret of her success with the thousands who read her novels. Among the majority of her readers will be found the tacit acceptance of the fallacy that novels are not serious books, and that serious books are more worthy of attention than lighter literature. In this belief they live and move, but the flesh is weak and conduct rarely attains to profession. When reading the novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward they can still their twinges of conscience in the persuasion that they are studying almost serious books, an opinion in which others will more than agree with them. Among the amateurs of social and religious thought, who are interested in topics of the day, without any inclination to observe and think for themselves, will be found the admiring readers of *Robert Elsmere* and *Marcella*. There is a finality, an authoritative manner in

Mrs. Humphry Ward, b. 1851.

the implications of these books, which cannot fail to impress. How many who read *Robert Elsmere* must have been staggered to notice that, despite its overpowering evidence, there were still clergymen who held their orders and betrayed no intention of relinquishing them. It is difficult to avoid the belief that in reading these novels one stands in the forefront of modern and advanced thought. The reader is flattered, continues to read and gathers others about him.

For these dilettantes in seriousness there is no question of art. A book is nothing in itself apart from the moral instruction it conveys. For the magic of style they have no faculty of appreciation ; emotion and imagination only puzzle them. And humour, without which life cannot be clearly seen, they probably regard as unworthy the dignity of better-class fiction. But for others, and they are not a small class, it is the absence of these qualities which prevents them from regarding Mrs. Humphry Ward as a great writer. Her work is interesting and valuable to her generation in its comprehensive grasp of present-day conditions ; but unemotional and intellectual photography is not art and has little likelihood of long life. The profoundest topic intellectually treated in narrative is as short-lived as most intellectual dogmatisms. But the overpowering seriousness of it all has won the respect of masses who regard Mrs. Humphry Ward as a teacher, delivering earnestly the important message committed to her ; while the wit, humour and ironical banter of her kinsman, Matthew Arnold, brought him the reputation of being a sceptic who trifled carelessly with serious things.

The tenor of Mrs. Humphry Ward's books is partly accounted for by the history of her early life. Her father, Thomas Arnold, was a son of the great head master of Rugby. Thomas Arnold, the younger, was an inspector of schools in Tasmania, and Mary Augusta was born at Hobart in 1851. About this time her father's mind was troubled with religious difficulties ; and in 1856 he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. In consequence he resigned his inspectorship, returned home with his family, and was appointed by Newman, Professor of English Literature at Dublin. He followed Newman to

Birmingham, and there published his *Manual of English Literature* (1862). Again doubts came upon him and he reverted to the Anglican Communion. But in 1877 he returned to the Church of Rome; and in 1882 he was appointed Professor of English Literature at University College, Dublin. He died in 1900. His daughter was brought up chiefly at Oxford; and early associations with scholarship and religious discussion have permanently impressed themselves upon her mind. In 1872 she married Mr. Thomas Humphry Ward, fellow and tutor of Brasenose, editor of the well-known *English Poets* (1880–81), and later the principal art critic of *The Times*. Thus Mrs. Humphry Ward grew up under the traditions of Oxford, the Arnolds and an academic atmosphere of religious conflict. And equally with George Eliot, with whom it is natural to compare her, her work is powerfully influenced by the environment of her girlhood. In the Oxford manner Mrs. Humphry Ward instructs those less fortunate than herself, with a high moral earnestness she carries on her shoulders the burden of all the churches, and in the surcharged atmosphere of religious difficulties she breathes freely.

She began as an authoress by contributing articles to Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography* (1877–87) and wrote reviews for *Macmillan's Magazine*. In 1885 she published a translation of Amiel's *Journal Intime*. Her first experiment in fiction was a child's story; and her first true novel, *Miss Bretherton* (1886), is but a slight book. In 1888 came *Robert Elsmere*, a novel gathering up the strands of the battle between religion, philosophy and science, summarising admirably the main features of the conflict as they appeared to men in the fourth quarter of the last century. The book came a little after the particular battle it described was over, with honours drawn on either side; but because it was a belated picture it made a wide appeal to the great majority who always learn after the event. It ran through seven three-volume editions in England and a large number of cheap editions in America. Whatever its merits or demerits, whether as a work of art or a philosophic-religious tract, *Robert Elsmere* was one of the most widely-read novels of the period. Its popularity it owed chiefly to its dis-

cussion of religious questions; for, in the form of a serious novel, Mrs. Humphry Ward succeeded in forcing home upon thousands, normally uninterested in these questions, a remarkable anxiety concerning the place of the miraculous in religious belief. Mr. Gladstone came out into the lists to defend Christianity in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century;* the book was reviewed and written upon in German periodicals and translated into many languages. If this combination of notoriety and popularity was due primarily to the religious and spiritual problems treated in the book, *Robert Elsmere* is not without strong character-drawing and dramatic force. The didactic persistency of the narrative may be incongruous with good art, but the book can claim to be a true picture of English life at a certain stage of the nineteenth century, it reflects its academic thought, country, middle-class and cultured life. In her character sketches Mrs. Ward borrows from contemporary situation—Grey of St. Anselm's is studied from T. H. Green, the philosopher, and J. R. Green, the historian. The thought is not new, it reflects to a large extent the ideas of Matthew Arnold, which in themselves were not those of an original thinker. Arnold attempted to save religion in England by recasting it hurriedly upon paper, with the equipment of a fine culture, a remarkably good knowledge of the Authorised Version of the Bible and a creditable acquaintance with the results of biblical higher criticism. The intention, however good, was fated to failure. Newman, in another direction, had tried it before, only to discover that the *Via Media* was a paper religion, whereas Protestantism and Catholicism were religions of the heart which had swayed the emotions and morals of generations of men. The modified forms of Christianity to be found in *Literature and Dogma* and *Robert Elsmere* are interesting as personal studies, but they make no difference to the mass of the people.

And Mrs. Ward is too serious; she has none of the supercilious humour and irony of Arnold. Her literary gift in *Robert Elsmere* best appears in the happy appropriateness of her quotations, and in her passages descriptive of nature. She reaches distinction in her painting of landscape, sunlight, shadow, wind and rain. And in this

faculty she is not confined to the scenery of Westmorland or any other part of England with which she is intimately acquainted. In one of her later novels, *Canadian Born* (1910), a story of colonial life, the fruit of a visit to Canada, she is at her best in this aspect of her work. The description of Lake Louise, bathed in the freshness of the morning, will almost compare with Meredith's wonderful description of sunrise in Tyrol. The worst feature of *Robert Elsmere*, on the other hand, is the figure of the sceptical and scholarly squire of Elsmere's parish, an exaggerated Coningsby of the intellect, a character far more ludicrous than impressive.

The *History of David Grieve* is a tale even more ambitious than *Robert Elsmere*, and heavily overweighted with didactic purpose, covering a wide field of study in sociological and religious problems. In *David Grieve* the authoress has chosen for her hero not the scholar, but a rough man of the lower classes. Lawful marriage and free love are contrasted in his relationship with two women; his mental experience affords an opportunity for illustrating the battle of the modern sects, in religion, politics, sociology. In a popular edition of *David Grieve* Mrs. Ward chose to defend the novel of speculative ideas by asserting that in life these are present, and that to cast them away is to confine art to the reflection of but a part of life. In her eyes the speculative matter of *David Grieve* is as legitimate to the novelist as the emotions of the peasant. Mrs. Ward failed to see that the question is not whether speculative ideas should find their way into the novel, nor even the extent to which they should find their way, but the manner in which they are introduced. Assuming, despite the theory of Wilde, that it is the business of art to reflect life, the artist has also to remember that nothing in nature or in human nature is plainly expository of any ethical or religious idea, save that brought to it by the spectator. And great art, in like manner, has no neat and unmistakable doctrines of life and conduct. Experience is action and reaction between man and his environment; whatever inspiration art has to offer lies in a temperamental reciprocity between the individual and the novel, poem or picture. But in *David Grieve* we sit at the feet of a mistress who

permits no doubt of her meaning; nothing is left to be gathered from experience; we learn by rote from a text-book. And in the end of things, Jane Austen or Synge, to choose two dissimilar types, who never dreamed of inculcating religious or speculative ideas, set us more in harmony with life, and therefore move us more for good than all the laboured philosophies of all the intellectual novelists.

The content of *David Grieve* is large, the matter diversified, the scope a little overpowering. With *Robert Elsmere*, and two later novels, *Helbeck of Bannisdale* (1898) and *The Case of Richard Meynell* (1911), it is to be counted with those tales of Mrs. Humphry Ward which deal mainly with religious problems. *Helbeck of Bannisdale* traces the love affairs of a devout Catholic and an Agnostic girl. *The Case of Richard Meynell* is a sequel to *Robert Elsmere*, and introduces characters from the earlier book. But times have changed, the full tide of Modernism has set in, and Richard Meynell, a beneficed clergyman and leader of the Modernists, claims the right for himself and those who follow him to remain within the national church, there to work out their salvation and that of a church which is rapidly losing its hold upon the people because it refuses to modify its interpretation of the creeds. As a story it moves more rapidly than *Robert Elsmere;* and the optimistic futurism of the hero is certainly more attractive than the painful conscientiousness of the central figure of the earlier book. But in unbending seriousness and confident didacticism Mrs. Ward has lost nothing in the interval of twenty-three years.

David Grieve showed that the authoress was as much interested in politics and social questions as in religion; and *Marcella*, its sequel, *Sir George Tressady* (1896) and *The Coryston Family* (1913) are largely concerned with social questions. In *Marcella* Mrs. Ward has drawn the woman of intellect and culture, who discovers that the world is not to be regenerated by doctrines of socialism untouched by force of character. *Sir George Tressady* continues the story of Marcella and introduces the young politician, Tressady, whom she succeeds unintentionally in alluring into love with her in the course of trying to win his vote for her husband's party. *The Coryston*

Family, in large and spectacular outline, covers the ground of most social and political questions in our day. It is able, it is ingenious, and again it illustrates Mrs. Ward's power of putting together a vastly complicated scene of action. But theories and questions are so obviously the chief interest of the authoress, that the reader is never moved to reciprocal interest in her characters, who are only foils to doctrine.

Besides these Mrs. Ward has written tales of a more general kind, based upon character-study and less upon the development of abstract and speculative ideas, though these are by no means divorced from the narrative. Among these miscellaneous novels the more important are *Lady Rose's Daughter* (1903), which borrows its theme from the story of Mlle. Lespinasse, *The Marriage of William Ashe* (1905), the story of a statesman and his unruly wife, an adaptation of the history of Lady Caroline Lamb, and *Fenwick's Career* (1906), a tale of artistic life, in part indebted to the career of Haydon.

With George Eliot Mrs. Humphry Ward has been refused the name and honour of artist, and described as a woman of great intellectual powers who has chosen to write novels. And in her case the disparagement has greater truth. In her four earlier books, when she drew upon the reminiscences of girlhood, George Eliot sketched characters like Janet, Adam Bede, Mrs. Poyser, Silas Marner ; but, after four or five short years of inspiration, she fell back upon hard thinking, and no great work of art, no convincing portrait of a personality, has been created by diligent thought. Mrs. Humphry Ward begins by shaping her novels and the characters they contain intellectually, without emotional leavening, and the result is a series of novels which reflects contemporary life, faithfully, closely, patiently, in a number of its aspects and in diverse social planes, but the whole is lacking in spontaneity, it is too evidently a work of industry and strong talent. Emotion there is little, save a high enthusiasm of the intellect ; wit and humour are absent, and to the writer's credit, be it said, she makes no pretence to these gifts. It is difficult, indeed, to think of any novelist more serious-minded since Richardson put the finishing touches to *Grandison*. Mrs. Ward's theories and doc-

trines are the common heritage of her family since the days of Thomas Arnold at Rugby. These she has shaped into the substance of prose fiction. The enthusiasm of the philanthropist and reformer is hers; unconscious superiority of manner engendered by a creed of culture limits the range of her sympathy. The unloveliness of Dissent disturbs her as it did Matthew Arnold; and she has little share in the vision granted to Browning and Walt Whitman, that the vulgar failures of life are often as valuable in the sight of God and man as the bitter defeat of the dreamer of noble ideas. Mrs. Humphry Ward's view of life is too unbendingly serious, and too academic, to note clearly and consistently the real springs of life in those primal emotions and impulses which finally govern the tangled complexities of a social world thinly veneered with artifice and convention. Tolstoy could be as perseveringly didactic as Mrs. Humphry Ward, but he understood the natural man and woman who have never sought the means of grace; Mrs. Ward writes of these only by hearsay and guess. She would have been a better observer of life had she been taught to think less in the language of books: she is always least the artist when she thinks most; and it is rarely she escapes forcing her work by hard thinking.

In the technique of the novel she has learned much. She can unfold a tale with great skill, whether in her longer books or in the short *Story of Bessie Costrell* (1895); and her development of the narrative by means of dialogue is often strikingly ingenious. But these virtues do not save Mrs. Humphry Ward's novels from appearing works of intellect rather than inspiration.

The tenor of Mrs. Ward's thought had been settled in the Victorian days of Tennysonian morality, in the atmosphere of eager conflict between the forces of sceptical science and orthodox religious belief, at a time when the more ardent of the leisured and fortunate class confidently hoped that they had only to stoop to raise the masses to a plane of higher thinking and happier life. Many things have changed and some illusions have been shattered since; but Mrs. Ward's attitude toward the world of men and women has not greatly altered. Though she is always earnestly occupied with the question of the hour

she remains Victorian, distant, staid in her manner; and among women writers of the intellectual novel she has no true successor. In one sense she belongs to a past, and others to whom it is now natural to turn belong to a new world. If they treat, as they do at large, questions social, sexual, religious, it is in a new, a franker and a more uncompromisingly realistic manner. Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* (1883) may be taken as a rough indication of a new date in the story of the feminine novel. Other women writers who have, since that time, built their narratives upon questions of religion, sex, morality, are not necessarily to be counted her disciples, but the *Story of an African Farm* marks the beginning of a new spirit and method. And among others who have followed a similar path are to be named Sarah Grand, George Egerton, Iota, Elizabeth Robins, Beatrice Harraden, May Sinclair, Lucas Malet and Miss M. P. Willcocks.

Olive Schreiner, b. 1862.

Olive Schreiner (Mrs. S. C. Cronwright) was born in Basutoland where her father was a Lutheran missionary. In 1882 she came to England with the manuscript of her *Story of an African Farm*, which was published in the following year. And, though she has continued to write at intervals for thirty years, she will be remembered by this one book. The title is scarcely a guide to its contents. It is not a story of adventure, nor of pioneer life, nor even a quiet and descriptive narrative of life on an African farm. Olive Schreiner possesses the gifts of imagination and a picturesque style, which enable her to draw vividly life on a lonely Boer farm set in the midst of the sandy veldt. She shows sympathetic insight and abundant humour in her drawing of the characters of the fat and dirty Boer widow, Tant' Sannie, of the kindly and gullible German overseer, of the ragged Irish adventurer, Bonaparte Blenkins, of the two little girls, Em and Lyndall, and of the German boy, Waldo. In simplicity of narration, economy of material, close concentration in the drawing of characters and scenes, the *Story of an African Farm* is an example of true art. But the groundwork of the narrative lies deeper, in the study of a mind tortured with religious doubts. The ideas belong to an old, a

way-weary and a sophisticated world. It is a sad and haunting tale of the passage of a sensitive and lonely mind from Calvinism to Atheism. And in the latter half of the book woman, her rights in society and her relationship to man arise for discussion. The beauty, the tragic intensity and the frank sincerity of the story would save the book were the abstract basis of the narrative more obviously exposed; but it is impossible not to suspect, despite the realism of the character-drawing, that the ideas are incongruous with their setting. So much simplicity and so much sophisticated argument of the mind are incompatible. The doubts which resolve themselves into the passionate scepticism of the boy, Waldo, would find their fitting home in London or a University town. The *Story of an African Farm* is a book of two parts. Whatever the value of the transcendental musings, these are a matter of small moment in comparison with the art and beauty of the narrative.

Nothing that Olive Schreiner has since written is of equal importance or interest. *Dreams* (1891) and *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893) contain idylls and dream fantasies carrying an ethical or spiritual meaning. But the best of her later writings is *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897), an allegory in which Christ appears to a trooper lost on the veldt and shows him the evil works of Cecil Rhodes and the Chartered Company in shooting natives, burning kraals and forcing native labour. In simplicity and eloquence of style it is a pamphlet of rare distinction. The attack was not allowed to pass unanswered. In *The Resurrection of Peter* (1900) Princess Radziwill writes of another Christ who appears and demolishes his predecessor's arguments by explaining the gospel of imperialistic Christianity. Throughout the retort the trooper's surname is misspelt.

With one exception the later writings of Olive Schreiner fall far below the level of her first book; and they are scarcely more than occasional pieces. In the *Story of an African Farm* she seems to have exhausted her powers of drawing on any scale from observation and experience. Latterly her interest has been almost entirely diverted to ethical and political questions; and even her first book would probably not have been written save as a garment

to clothe the argument between belief and unbelief. As a novel and a work of art it is successful despite the intention of the authoress. The question of woman's place in society is also, as already has been hinted, a subsidiary part of the book's ethical implication; and this is almost the whole business of Sarah Grand's novels.

Sarah Grand, b. 1862.

Sarah Grand (Mrs. Frances Elizabeth M'Fall) has asserted that "The 'novel with a purpose' and the 'sex novel' are more powerful at the present time, especially for good, than any other social influence." And she takes comfort in the thought that Mrs. Humphry Ward has a thousand readers to Stevenson's one. She herself has written several novels with a purpose advocating what is vaguely known as the woman movement. She is anxious that woman should enjoy a better social and moral relationship with man in order that the race may be bettered. "Emancipated women consider motherhood the most important function of their lives. . . . For this reason they have begun to demand a much higher standard of morals and physique than usual to satisfy them in their husbands." *Ideala* (1888), like Grant Allen's *Woman Who Did*, is an outspoken sex novel. Ideala, the eccentric, original and independent woman, with a weakness for uttering moral maxims and plunging into lengthy monologue, falls in love with a man other than her indifferent and faithless husband. She determines to form a free union, but realises in time that even were this course justifiable to her, it might by other people be used as an example to provide them with specious excuses for their own ends, and she refuses. At this moment the truth of the maxim she utters much earlier in the book—"Unfortunately there appears to be no neutral ground for us women: we either do good or harm"—is borne in upon her. *Ideala* is a tract rather than a novel. It has none of the dramatic interest of *The Woman Who Did;* and the chief function of the heroine is to utter lengthy comments upon life. Art in the telling of the narrative there is none; but the hortatory matter is relieved by abundance of epigram and illuminating humour.

Sarah Grand's best known work, *The Heavenly Twins*

(1893), even more pertinently illustrates her incompetence as a story-teller. The narrative wanders by devious paths, and the whole leaves upon the mind a sense of utter formlessness. The escapades of the twins are subordinated to the story of the woman who discovers her husband's past the moment after marriage, and forthright refuses to live with him. Evadne is the typical illustration of Sarah Grand's contention that woman must henceforth demand in man the same standard of morality as she expects in her sisters. The narrative is surcharged with ethical implication and moral discourses which are but clumsily united to the action of the story. The whole book may be described as disorganised diorama. Nevertheless it has the force of strong individuality and the personal point of view; and the humour is of the best, springing from the characters and illustrating them; it is not merely an embellishment to the narrative.

In the art of narrative *The Beth Book* (1897) is greatly superior to *The Heavenly Twins*. Beth is another exemplar of the new woman. Her story from childhood to married life is carried forward in clear sequence. *Babs the Impossible* (1901) is the study of a type of girlhood and the contact of a young woman with the world. The short stories of *Emotional Moments* (1908) were many of them written at a somewhat earlier date. They illustrate varying moods and emotions in the feminine mind.

In art of narrative and in the faculty of presenting a large number of characters in interaction with each other Sarah Grand has given us her best work in *Adnam's Orchard* (1912). It is a book far less argumentative than her earlier tales, though sidelights upon questions of sex, the position of woman, the relationship of rich and poor are by no means absent; nor has the author shaken off the habit of turning from her tale to address the reader. But the story is left to produce its own effect, without exegetical commentary, and with a greater freedom than Sarah Grand has hitherto allowed to it. The background also is new; for *Adnam's Orchard* is a picture of rural life, contrasting labourers, farmers, yeomanry, with the landed and titled classes. Adnam, the pioneer of intensive culture in his neighbourhood, his father and mother, Ella Banks, the lacemaker, the yokels in the inn parlour and

the household at the castle are all drawn with greater truth and impersonality than the authoress has succeeded in reaching in any of her earlier books.

Sarah Grand is a woman of strong intellectual force; she has humour and an eye observant of human nature; she is possessed by a sincere indignation at the disadvantages under which she imagines woman to labour in a society made by man for himself. She adopts the form of the novel, because, apart from pulpit and platform, it is the surest and most direct means of appeal to the great mass of those who can be stirred to thought upon any question. She is not wholly without the art of character-drawing, but it may be doubted whether she has any true sympathy with men and women apart from the ideals and conceptions they illustrate to her. Her women, Ideala, Beth, Evadne, are not so much women as idealisations of the new woman; and in complexity of character interest she has done her best work in *Adnam's Orchard*, in which she is least possessed with the spirit of the reformer. Yet, with all her faults as an artist, her didacticism, her total lack of any sense of form, her outbursts of exaggerated diatribe, her novels, like those of George Egerton, stand for something individual and distinctive in the expanse of feminine fiction. The thought is intense, sincere and consistent. The moral inspiration of her ideals and convictions is without a doubt. It would have been well had her genuine gift of humour saved her from some of those uncontrolled statements which are near neighbours to the shriek of Trafalgar Square. Even in the most equable of her books, *Adnam's Orchard*, she can close a long passage of commentary with the childish assertion that, "When man legislates for woman, it is not the brute in him that prevails, it is the devil." Fortunately these hysterical lapses are few; and her better mind is expressed in words which are the groundwork of all her writing:

> "Personally I believe that the woman movement is a great effort of the human race, an evolutionary effort, to raise itself a step higher in the scale of development; and this conviction forced itself upon me when I found that, beneath the surface, earnest and intelligent women

were everywhere expressing great dissatisfaction at the present haphazard of marriage and maternity."

George Egerton (Mrs. Golding Bright) is to be counted in the same group of women novelists, for though in her earliest and best tales she was a disciple of the French naturalistic school, she writes with a moral purpose and to advocate a fuller and franker equality of the sexes. Many years ago a daily paper declared of her that she wrote with "the least amount of literary skill, and the worst literary taste." The statement serves to illustrate the blindness of the average reviewer to the work of an author who is sincerely attempting to present life with no eye to the common market standard of fiction in the day. George Egerton's contributions to the *Yellow Book* and her early short stories single her out as the feminine counterpart of Hubert Crackanthorpe; and this is high praise. Her writing reflects an original mind, a power to draw upon observation, and it is in tales of close realism or in the psychological study of souls which have sinned and suffered that she is most successful. In the imaginative realisation of beauty she is wanting; and for this reason the moral fairy-tales of *Fantasias* (1898) fail of their purpose—they lack charm, the style of the author is not suited to the subject. In *Symphonies* (1897) the redemption of life through hopes, ideals, affections and the tender sympathy that comes of blighted ambitions is drawn with true feeling; although these tales impress upon the reader the conviction that life is a strangely a-symphonic affair. The volume contains much good work. Among its best tales are 'The Captain's Book,' the story of an ineffective dreamer who never wrote the great book that was the nursling of a lifelong imagining, and 'Oony,' a pathetic story of Irish life.

George Egerton.

George Egerton's strongest work is, however, contained in the harsh and unshrinking realism of an earlier book, *Discords* (1894). 'Wedlock,' an extraordinary and almost repulsive story, which might have come from Gorky, compels admiration for its truth in observation and its fidelity in detail. In a different mode 'Gone Under' is a fine piece of psychological insight, though it illustrates the author's want of brevity and entire relevance in the

use of every detail, so admirable in the work of Crackanthorpe. And in her later stories and sketches the fault of diffuseness grows upon George Egerton. But for a few years in the early 'nineties hardly anyone was doing better, stronger and more sincere work than she.

Her later books, which are less distinctive of her genius, may be noted briefly. *Rosa Amorosa* (1901), a book of woman's love letters, appeared shortly after Mr. Laurence Housman's *Englishwoman's Love Letters*, although they were written before its publication. They reveal a woman more human and lovable than the tediously self-conscious being of Mr. Housman's letters. The letters themselves are strong, simple and unaffected. The sketches and stories of *Flies in Amber* (1905) are hardly up to the standard of the early tales. George Egerton has faller further into a tendency, to which she was always prone, of telling a story by fluttering flights about its centre; and she has lost the fine directness of her earlier style.

It is the misfortune of some women writers that they cannot treat questions of sex without exaggeration or morbid obsession with a single idea. Sarah Grand's humour does not save her from this failing. George Egerton knows the world of men and women better; and, therefore, though she deals realistically with sordid scenes and characters there is no taint of morbidity in her writing: and this is equally true of the problem novels of Iota (Mrs. Kathleen Caffyn). Her first book, *A Yellow Aster* (1894), gave her a reputation. Two years before Miss Corelli's *Mighty Atom* it chose for its subject the exclusion of religious teaching from the education of children. Thereafter the story tells of the growth of love through maternity in the daughter of unparental scientists. It is a thoughtful piece of work, though characterisation and plot sequence leave much to be desired. The latter part of the narrative is, however, better conceived and carried through than the earlier. In cohesion and clearness *Children of Circumstance* (1894) loses much. It has all the appearance of having been written before its predecessor, although the characterisation is more subtle and calls for greater attention. The narrative turns upon the stale familiarity of a wedded pair who find it impossibe

Iota, b. 1856.

to overcome the incompatibility of their characters. The best of Iota's later books are *Anne Maulverer* (1899), a fine study painted in strong, sure touches, and *Patricia* (1905), a problem in contrast between a woman and her daughter-in-law, whom she misunderstands. Nor does one of her latest books, *The Fire-seeker* (1911), fall behind these in the faithfulness with which she treats the interaction of character with character. Iota's work is always worthy a careful reading; for she has no irrational prepossessions, she sees life clearly, simply and in the light of humour, and she has a wide knowledge of men and women in different parts of the world. Her entire interest is with the soul in crisis and development, and in dramatic quality her narrative largely fails. Her dialogue also is sometimes prolix; the bearing of her narrative is occasionally obscure; but her character-drawing is nearly always good.

Elizabeth Robins.

When Elizabeth Robins (Mrs. George Richmond Parks) embraced the "woman movement" she did her work as a novelist irreparable injury. Her best writing was all done before she was troubled with questions of sex and the place of woman in the social order. She was born and educated in America, and first made a name for herself as an actress, especially as an interpreter of Ibsen's heroines. Her first novels, *George Mandeville's Husband* (1894), *The New Man* (1895), *Below the Salt* (1896) and *The Open Question* (1898) were written under the pen-name of C. E. Riamond. But in 1904 she published under her own name the powerful *Magnetic North*. The earlier novels are chiefly studies of problems in modern social life; though *Below the Salt* consists chiefly of farcical sketches of life below stairs. In *The Open Question* Elizabeth Robins took up a problem dear to the heart of Ibsen, and probably suggested by him, the influence of heredity. The lovers of the story are two cousins with the seed of consumption in them. The earlier novels exhibit the chief characteristics which belong to the later—the intellectual force of the writer, her interest in questions concerning her sex, and the almost masculine attitude of her mind.

The last named characteristic becomes more pronounced in those books in which she abandoned a pseudonym.

The Magnetic North breaks new ground. The authoress made herself acquainted with the details of the Klondyke gold-rush; and her story, which falls naturally into three parts, traces the history of five men and their disillusion with the land whither they came hoping for wealth. *The Magnetic North* is no tale of adventure; it is largely written in dialogue, and it digresses with unpardonable frequency. But the characters of the Kentucky Colonel, the agnostic Boy and the woman, Maudie, are brilliantly and sympathetically delineated. Four years later Elizabeth Robins followed *The Magnetic North* with another tale, *Come and Find Me!* (1908), in which the scene is laid partly in California and partly in Alaska. The two, in their open-air and romantic character, are remarkable books for a woman to write; and it is not surprising that the C. E. Raimond of the earlier novels was mistaken for a man.

Unfortunately at this stage Elizabeth Robins chose to become more definitely a novelist with a purpose. In 1907 she wrote *The Convert*, a document in the form of fiction upholding the cause of women's suffrage. In the same year she composed a play, *Votes for Women*. And in 1912 came a lurid tract, *Where are you going to . . . ?*, an extravagantly coloured picture of the white-slave traffic, which appeared during one of those periods of moral indignation which seize the English public, and it enjoyed, therefore, a notoriety it did not deserve either as a novel or as a faithful picture of the evil it delineated.

It is in the work of her middle period that Elizabeth Robins writes at her best, in *The Open Question*, *The Magnetic North*, *A Dark Lantern* (1905) and *Come and Find Me!* These are novels built upon observation and clear, unprejudiced thinking. They are written also with a steadiness and sincerity of intention, a close grasp of essentials, and an interest in the life of action and the open air, which lend them the character of work by a man rather than a woman. The proportion of dialogue to direct narrative is very large in all her books. And yet she eschews the attempt to write brilliantly. Her people talk as we believe they would. Her dialogue is remarkably realistic and handled with great skill in carrying the narrative forward. Her drawing of character

is broad and objective, unlike the detailed and more complicated manner of many women novelists. If in anything Elizabeth Robins' narrative is wanting in background. Even in *The Magnetic North* the Alaskan wilderness is sketched in with a bare sufficiency of line and colour. There is not the slightest suggestion of intimate acquaintance with or a love of the wilds. The river, the hills, Dawson City and the snows are paint and pasteboard, like a piece of stage scenery. In these pictures of the north Elizabeth Robins challenges comparison with the wonderful and vivid painting of Jack London, and it is a comparison she cannot sustain.

May Sinclair.

With Elizabeth Robins Miss May Sinclair exhibits toward life an attitude curiously masculine, yet marked by traits which are patently feminine. No man could find so continuous a source of interest in the psychology of irregular relationships as Miss Sinclair discovers. The masculine mind is more objective and indifferent where men and women are concerned; even the nervous French temperament is not obsessed in the same way. Nor again does the ordinary masculine writer make that parade of learned lore which Miss Sinclair presents for our admiration in *The Divine Fire* (1904). In like manner Miss M. P. Willcocks, to choose but one example of another living writer, often goes far to reduce to tedium a dramatic story by loading it with masses of irrelevant knowledge.

Miss Sinclair wishes to make us feel the incongruity between the soul of the shopkeeper-poet and his surroundings, but in so doing she burdens the narrative with an unnecessary weight of learning. This is a fault in art. The obsession of her narrative in *The Divine Fire*, *Kitty Tailleur* (1908) and *The Combined Maze* (1913) with the sensuous side of sexual relationship is a fault in balance and judgment. Women fair and frail the world has always known; but Miss Sinclair's erring women are false to reality in their entire want of prudential consideration and self-knowledge. Neither in aberration or in penitence are they credible. Their motives are hard to read, their actions causeless, and we imagine that Miss Sinclair, like the Brontës, confuses sensationalism with

realistic strength. In style and in the conduct of the narrative she is only too prone to lay on her colours thickly and crudely. *The Divine Fire* and *The Creators* (1910) are hymns to literary genius, in which the fine frenzy of the creative artist is laboured to weariness. It is well to remember that great artists, from Shakespeare to Rodin, have been comparatively sober and ordinary human beings. And, though she is capable of simple writing, Miss Sinclair can be as rhetorical and bombastic as Charlotte Brontë at her worst. Her excellent book on the Brontës is disfigured by purple patches of rodomontade; and her novels often suffer in the same way. If, for example, she wishes to inform us of the simple fact that reviewers were changing their attitude toward the work of George Tanqueray she writes:

> "They postured now in attitudes of prudery and terror; they protested; they proclaimed themselves victims of diabolic power, worshippers of the purity, the sanctity of English letters, constrained to an act of unholy propitiation."

Disproportion more ludicrous between words and the meaning they are intended to convey it is difficult to conceive. Fortunately Miss Sinclair is learning a more guarded restraint. *The Combined Maze*, the story of the heroic bearing of a London clerk under tragic marriage conditions, is told with a rapidity and directness which is more effective by far than the manner of her ambitious novels.

It would seem a difficulty for the intellectual woman who is also an artist to combine these two sides of her nature. George Eliot's later work breaks down under the stress of conflict between intellect and imagination. And in Miss Sinclair the same absence of equipoise is apparent. Intellect often masters her art. When, as in *The Combined Maze*, she is compelled to write of the ordinary and unintellectual experiences of life she is saved from her besetting temptation.

To a certain extent the faults charged against the work of Miss Sinclair are also the failings of an able writer, Miss M. P. Willcocks, whose books have their setting in the West Country. In no case, however, have her

tales any essential connection with place; they are not, like the novels of John Trevena or Mr. Eden Phillpotts, tales of the people and the soil. In any other environment the characters, with slight modification, would equally be real beings. *Widdicombe* (1905) first made her name known. *The Wingless Victory* (1907) and *A Man of Genius* (1908) further enhanced her reputation; and *The Power Behind* (1913) enjoyed an even greater popularity. Miss Willcocks' novels in intention, and to some degree in accomplishment, are set far above the common standard of the popular novel. She is sincere, conscientious, painstaking and a woman of wide knowledge. But she cannot restrain herself from emptying dead knowledge, whether relevant or irrelevant to the action, into the pages of her narrative. She is hard-working, thoughtful, intellectual, and these gifts she uses to the best advantage; but her power as an artist is not in proportion to her endeavour.

M. P. Willcocks, b. 1869.

Miss Beatrice Harraden is another writer who may more distantly be included in the "woman movement." She was twenty-nine when she won fame with *Ships That Pass in the Night* (1893), a book which had a phenomenal sale. The popularity of the tale was due to its sentimental ethics and simple piety, lures which never fail to find response in the great middle class of the British public. Bernadine, the self-centred English girl, learns the lesson of everyday dutifulness in the scenes of pathos and misery which she witnesses in a foreign Kurhaus. She comes home, after touching the heart of the most disagreeable man in the English colony, to brighten the life of her old uncle. She dies in consequence of an accident, but duly fulfils her part by leaving an edifying message behind her. The languid story has little merit either in style or characterisation. *Hilda Strafford* (1897), a tale of no great length, illustrates in another way the same lesson in conduct. A selfish wife fails to realise her duty of love and helpfulness toward her husband. In *Katharine Frensham* (1903) the moral is diverted in the contrary direction—the beautiful nature of the heroine wins a moral victory over the sensitive

Beatrice Harraden, b. 1864.

and irritable hero. *Out of the Wreck I Rise* (1912) is a longer, a more ambitious and a more successful, but in no wise a remarkable book. A part of the narrative is founded upon a recent and well-known case of embezzlement by a dramatic agent. Adrian Steele, in the story, defrauds his clients; but under the influence of a mystical clergyman and other friends reaches a better frame of mind. Unfortunately a careless avalanche buries him and his hopes of a nobler life. Both title and the plot *motif*—discovery of the true self and instant death—are borrowed from Browning.

The sentiment and ethical faith of Miss Beatrice Harraden's tales have touched the heart of many thousands of English readers in this and other lands. Her gifts as a writer are, however, slight. She has little invention or imagination; and as a stylist she can make no claim. At the most it may be said that her tales are wholesome and do not offend against likelihood and probability.

Lucas Malet, b. 1852.

Lucas Malet (Mrs. Mary St. Leger Harrison) is also to be counted with writers of the feminine emancipation; but not wholly, for she is not a writer obsessed with a few ideas, and her work exhibits a wide range of experiment in diverse directions. She is a daughter of Charles Kingsley and was born at Eversley Rectory. In 1876 she married William Harrison, Rector of Clovelly, and a few years later published her first novel, *Mrs. Lorimer* (1882). For a first attempt it is a finely written book; the technique is good, the style is clean and vigorous. The story is not in itself remarkable—a young widow rejects a new love for a life of good works devoted to the memory of her dead husband. There is, however, one powerful scene in the picture of Fred Wharton's proposal to Mrs. Lorimer. Lucas Malet followed her first novel with *Colonel Enderby's Wife* (1885), *Little Peter* (1887), an idyll of country life with sketches of country characters, and *A Counsel of Perfection* (1888), which has a theme out of the common in its representation of a middle-aged woman's impulse to love a man unworthy of her. It is a curious and fascinating tale. But it was first with her outstanding novel, *The Wages of Sin* (1891), that Lucas Malet won wide recognition. The tale—a rising artist

falls into youthful indiscretion and pays the penalty in the ruin of his hopes when he attempts in later years to rise to a better and cleaner life—is developed with forcible realism and skilful concentration in the sequence of events. The tragic intensity of the story is relieved with gleams of ironic humour, the characters are carefully and strongly contrasted, the style is consistent and clear. In craftsmanship *The Wages of Sin* is not only Lucas Malet's best book; it is a novel that rises far above the level of contemporary fiction. Had the authoress written nothing else this book alone would serve to give her an honourable and distinctive place. In nothing that she has written since has she surpassed her work here.

The Carissima (1896) is a tale in another and farcical vein of comedy; and *The Gateless Barrier* (1900), a tale of psychic mystery, treats of the supernatural and has little to do with everyday reality. *The History of Sir Richard Calmady* (1901) won popularity, a popularity due doubtless to the uncommonness of the theme—the rake's progress of a crippled baronet—and the sensuous appeal of several chapters in the tale. But Calmady is only too obviously a figure of melodrama in the worst manner of Dumas; and Lucas Malet adopts a literary artifice in style which is a deliberate experiment with the pen rather than straightforward writing. As a true work of art, reflecting life and character, it will bear no comparison with *The Wages of Sin*. The allusive and less direct manner of writing adopted in *Sir Richard Calmady*, a manner in part, doubtless, borrowed from Meredith, persists in a greater or less degree in her later books. *Adrian Savage* (1911), a thoughtful but unnecessarily lengthy piece of writing, does not escape this tendency. The chief character is a man of letters, half English, half French, and the scene is laid partly in Paris, partly in the south of England. It is one of the large number of novels belonging to the feminist movement, novels which have for their object not only the study of character but a critical analysis of the most modern complications in religion, art, politics and the relationship of the sexes, novels that miss their end by an overwrought intensity and seriousness.

The character of Lucas Malet's work cannot be readily

or briefly summarised. She is versatile, she is widely-travelled, she has many interests, and though the degree of her success varies as she writes in different modes, she never fails completely through mistaking her intention or her powers. Her temper turns most naturally toward a direct realism, but, as *The Gateless Barrier* bears witness, the supernatural and the mystic is not unknown to her. Her style, save when she becomes imitative, is terse and strong; and she has a knack of apposite humour. Her quality as a writer is seen at its best in *The Wages of Sin*. In her later work she is far above the ordinary range, but she is not guiltless of writing to a standard expected of her instead of expressing what she feels and is compelled to utter.

John Oliver Hobbes, 1867–1906.

It is even more difficult to range John Oliver Hobbes (Mrs. Pearl Mary Teresa Craigie) with any school of writers. She was a modern woman, intellectually interested in all questions of the day; but she was far from being the purely analytic and didactic novelist: wit, fantasy and intellectual comedy are the most marked characteristics of her work. Although in certain aspects of her writing she is related to the group of women novelists defined above, she is not wholly of that group. In epigrammatic wit, in ideas and the fruitfulness of her comments upon character and social life John Oliver Hobbes has no exact parallel among contemporary authoresses. Her terse force and pointed wit were, doubtless, due in a measure to reaction against a life embittered by an unhappy marriage and the underlying seriousness of temperament of a woman who gave a large part of her waking hours to the claims of fashionable society, though she recognised the emptiness of its pursuits and the waste in its monotonous efforts to bridge the hours. Literature was with Mrs. Craigie an adopted profession, she fell back upon writing in order to forget; but she also came with a vocation to the art of writing.

John Oliver Hobbes was born in New England, but within a few months of her birth her parents brought her to London where they settled, and, though she never forgot her American origin, London became her home

to the end of her life. In her twentieth year she married Mr. Reginald Walpole Craigie. The marriage proved a mistake; she soon left her husband, and in 1895 obtained a divorce. The distress of mind through which she passed in these years led her to seek spiritual consolation, and in 1892 she was received into the Church of Rome.

Before the break with her husband she began to write, and in 1891 made her mark with the short tale *Some Emotions and a Moral*, which appeared in Fisher Unwin's "Pseudonym Library." On the title-page of the volume she adopted the *nom de plume* of John Oliver Hobbes. In England alone six thousand copies were sold in the first year and forty thousand before her death. The fascination of the book lies in its brilliant, acute and epigrammatic dialogue, and the cynical humour of its comments upon life. The narrative is of little importance, and the characters are wholly subservient to epigram; but it is impossible to read the opening dialogue without being caught by the allusive vivacity of the writing. The mind is continually arrested by light but pregnant comments upon life.

> "If women once begin to talk about their souls they're done for."
>
> "Why was transcendent virtue so much less charming in its methods than mere worldliness?"
>
> "Some people regard love as a civilised instinct; others as a side-dish.
>
> 'Those who regard it as a side-dish are less likely to get into trouble,' said Lady Theodosia."

Her second book, *The Sinner's Comedy* (1892), written during a period of intense mental strain and anguish, is similar in character to her first. And then quickly followed *A Study in Temptations* (1893), *A Bundle of Life* (1894) and *The Gods, Some Mortals and Lord Wickenham* (1895), all of which failed to attain the popularity of her first volume. The last named is one of John Oliver Hobbes' typical books, a mingling of fantasy, realism, light cynicism and serious purpose. In Dr. Warre, the central figure, she has given us one of her best studies in the psychology of a sensitive and retiring mind. Despite her banter and raillery John Oliver Hobbes never lets

us doubt her passionate admiration for fine feeling and fine thinking. In *The School for Saints* (1897) and *Robert Orange* (1902) the texture is closer, the flash of epigram less studied and the analysis of a single character more elaborate than in any of her earlier books. *Robert Orange*, the hero of both tales, is an idealised portrait of Disraeli. In the conclusion he deserts politics to take orders in the Church of Rome. On these two volumes John Oliver Hobbes expended much labour, thought and care, she gave more of herself and her philosophy of life than she was commonly disposed to reveal; for she was writing to please herself, not a reading public. These novels are not without dramatic moments; but the background is slight, narrative is subservient to ideas underlying it, and neither is of the type designed to win popularity. *Love and the Soul Hunters* (1902) does not admit of being summarised; it has that vagueness and indefiniteness in the welding of the ideas and the plot which explain John Oliver Hobbes' failure when she wrote for the stage. In clearness of narrative and definition of outline *The Vineyard* (1904), a study of life in a country town, is sharply contrasted with its predecessor. Her last book, *The Dream and the Business* (1906), is the largest in outline and the strongest in handling of any of her novels. The epigrammatic and vivacious manner was gradually abandoned by Mrs. Craigie; it persists, in larger or smaller measure, in all her novels up to the date of *The Gods, Some Mortals and Lord Wickenham;* after that, when it appears, it is only as an occasional ornament, not as a continuous embroidery of the narrative. In *The Dream and the Business* it has but a small part to play. The book consists of a skilful study in contrasts between the Roman Catholic, the Nonconformist and the Pagan temperaments; and the absence of prejudice is remarkable in one who followed seriously and with entire faith the religion of her adoption.

Mrs. Craigie also nursed ambitions as a dramatist, but the faults which beset her novels told with tenfold force against her when she wrote for the stage. *The Ambassador* (1898), a comedy in four acts, gained some success by reason of its witty dialogue; but *A Repentance* (1899) and *The Wisdom of the Wise* (1900) were too indistinct

in action and characterisation to meet with a favourable reception. The fantastic *Flute of Pan* (1904), after a successful production in Manchester, failed in London.

John Oliver Hobbes presented more than one side to the world. She described herself as living two lives, and her dual personality could be read in her novels did we not know it from other sources. In that round of social life in which she took her part she appeared vivacious, gay and high-spirited; in the sanctuary of her mind she was never free from melancholy. It was her wish to be considered an idealist and a philosophic novelist, not the author of witty and sparkling tales. But, despite her wide knowledge of philosophy and the wealth of her ideas, her mind was neither clear nor logical, and in her longer novels she fails to attain point and coherence. Her plots are often extremely ill handled, and the *lacunæ* of her narrative exasperate the reader. Her strength lies in the acuteness of her biting wit, the searching insight of many of her character studies (though she is not always stable and consistent in her delineation of personality) and in a style light and vivid but never shallow.

It has been said that the work of John Oliver Hobbes is not to be paralleled in the writings of contemporary authoresses. Nevertheless it may be permissible to name here one or two writers of distinction who are chiefly noteworthy for imaginative fantasy and a fine wit. Mary Coleridge is rightly remembered as a poet, but her prose-writing was not only far greater in volume than her verse, much of it is also well worthy of preservation. *Non Sequitur* (1900) was a volume of miscellaneous essays far removed from the ordinary in insight, critical thought and style; and at least one of her prose tales deserves to be remembered. Her first published novel, *The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus* (1893), an abnormally fantastic piece of writing, though it met with the praise of Stevenson, is not an example of her happiest manner. Nor are her two lengthy and ambitious historical romances, *The King with Two Faces* (1897) and *The Fiery Dawn* (1901) more than moderately successful experiments. The chief figure of the earlier romance is

Mary E. Coleridge, 1861–1907.

Gustav III of Sweden, of the latter the Duchesse de Berri, and we are introduced to the Paris of Gautier, Balzac and Hugo. Her only *novel*, and indeed the book is scarcely deserving the name, is *The Lady on the Drawing-room Floor* (1906), which relates, with droll wit, humour and tender pathos, the story of a man and woman who loved once and met again in a London lodging-house. Mary Coleridge's historical romances leave us cold and uninterested, but this exquisitely witty, true and gentle vignette of life induces a regret that she wrote nothing more of its kind. She was not by nature or instinct the novelist, her true gift lay with the fantasy; and as a writer of fiction, apart from *The Lady on the Drawing-room Floor*, she appears at her best in the few short stories she wrote, and of these the pathetic 'The King is dead, long live the King' may be named as one of the finest examples of her prose and her imaginative power.

Noteworthy also for the fine quality of their wit, irony, satire, terse and effective style are the easy and delightful minglings of essay, causerie and fiction contained in the writings of the anonymous authoress (Countess von Arnim)[1] of *Elizabeth and Her German Garden* (1898). Her first book was followed by others equally distinguished for their grace, light-handedness and satirical wit—among them *A Solitary Summer* (1899), *Princess Priscilla's Fortnight* (1906) and *Elizabeth's Adventures in Rügen* (1904). In *The Caravaners* (1909) the intentional thrust and directness of her satire upon German life and manners became emphatically pronounced, and the book gave not the less offence to its victims because the writer was intimately acquainted with the inner life of the country she attacked.

"Elizabeth."

Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler (Hon. Mrs. Alfred Felkin), although in her later books she has greatly changed her method, first gained reputation as a witty and epigrammatic writer. After publishing several volumes of slight verse she won general popularity with the novel, *Concerning Isabel Carnaby* (1898), a book chiefly remarkable, especially in the earlier chapters, for clever,

Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, b. 1860.

[1] Now Lady Russell. Married 2nd Earl Russell, 1916.

if artificial, dialogue and a plethora of epigram. The story contrasts the manners of a Methodist household with the ways of fashionable society, and involves a love episode between a Methodist tutor and a woman of the world. The hero, the heroine, a minister's humble household are all well conceived and clearly depicted, and the authoress's turn of epigram is often original and telling. An individual is summed up in the witty remark that his temper, like " canal bridges " was never equal to bearing more than " the ordinary traffic of the district " ; and the careless servant with the observation that " she seemed to regard herself as merely the instrument in a fore-ordained scheme of destruction." *Isabel Carnaby* is no excursion into a new field, yet it is genuine and sincere work, witty without triviality, for all Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler's tales are concerned with the tragedy of man's moral relationship to inexorable circumstance. But the moral intention of her novels, together with the plot, is wanting in originality. She will adopt, without scruple, wildly melodramatic plots, unconscious of the injury she inflicts upon her characters, who, better than their situation, are forced unwillingly to make the best of matters, scarcely able to hide the embarrassment they feel. In *A Double Thread* (1899) a woman of wealth plays an incredibly worked-out double *rôle*, sometimes posing as a poor twin-sister in order to find if she may win true love ; and *Miss Fallowfield's Fortune* (1908) is a tissue of improbabilities, in which fate juggles skilfully with life, death, an unexpected reappearance from the grave and a million of money. Nor is *The Wisdom of Folly* (1910), with its sensational murder case and its unhinged love affairs, more convincing in narrative. In these later books Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler almost entirely abandons the display of aphorism and epigram which gave character to her first novel and several of its successors—*The Farringdons* (1900), *Fuel of Fire* (1902) and *Place and Power* (1903).

If we set aside her interest in the claim of religion and morality on the heart Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler is not a writer of the day. Peculiarly modern hopes, ideals and ambitions are not reflected in her tales ; and she is not to be placed with writers like Miss Sinclair, Elizabeth

Robins or Matilde Serao. Her point of view is feminine, and the relationship of the sexes is to her as it was to Jane Austen. Her chief gifts are a power convincingly to characterise ordinary and commonplace people and a readiness in the use of good epigram. Work that might have been better worthy of mention has been weakened by absence of originality in vision and invention, by failure in plot-construction and surrender to melodrama.

Other women novelists whose work scarcely permits of definite classification under any heading can only be named briefly and after a loose chronological method. Lady Ritchie, the daughter of Thackeray, has followed in the footsteps of her father, but her work as a novelist antedates our period, and for many years she has written hardly any fiction. In her novels, her critical studies and her edition of her father's works she has shown herself the possessor of a fine literary gift and a graceful style. In *Elizabeth* (1863), *The Village on the Cliff* (1865), *Old Kensington* (1873), and other books leading to *Mrs. Dymond* (1885), she gave evidence of a power clearly and distinctively to portray life and character. In later years she has written essays, reminiscences and critical studies, and in 1898 she edited with admirable introductions the works of her father.

Lady Ritchie, b. 1838.

Mrs. M. L. Woods has won greater distinction as a poetess; and in another chapter it has been observed that if we are to judge her by her poetic drama, *Wild Justice*, and by her novels she is to be classed with the poetic realists. Tragedy and romance are mingled in her picture of village life contained in *A Village Tragedy* (1887), and in *The Vagabonds* (1894), a story of life in a travelling circus. In *Esther Vanhomrigh* (1891) Mrs. Woods reconstructs the hidden romance of Swift's life. These, together with her later books, *Sons of the Sword* (1901), *The King's Revoke* (1905) and others, manifest Mrs. Woods' simple, strong and large outlook upon her life, her intellectual force and her sense of the poetry of the commonplace.

Margaret Louisa Woods, b. 1856.

Among other women novelists who began to write in the earlier half of the ninth decade of the last

century John Strange Winter (Mrs. Henrietta Eliza Vaughan Stannard) and Mrs. W. K. Clifford cannot here be omitted, although in neither case is their work distinctive or significant.

John Strange Winter, 1856–1911.

John Strange Winter, the daughter of a Yorkshire rector, early began to contribute stories of a sentimental character to the magazines. Her father, before taking orders, had been an officer in the Royal Artillery and came of several generations of soldiers. It was, therefore, natural that the greater number of John Strange Winter's tales should describe the life of the army. After her marriage in 1884 she settled in London, and in 1885 *Bootle's Baby: A Story of the Scarlet Lancers* appeared in the *Graphic*. The tale when published in volume form met with extraordinary favour; and within ten years two million copies were sold. Other stories, similar in character, were then produced in rapid succession. The better known are *Houp-la* (1885), *On March* (1886), *Heart and Sword* (1898), *A Blaze of Glory* (1902), *Marty* (1903) and *Little Vanities of Miss Whittaker* (1904).

Outside her writing Mrs. Stannard had many activities. She took an interest in questions relating to women's dress and appearance, and even sold a toilet preparation of her own compounding. She was the first president of the Writers' Club (1892) and president of the Society of Women Journalists (1901–3).

Curiously enough Ruskin was one of the most devoted and admiring of her readers, and described her as "the author to whom we owe the most finished and faithful rendering ever yet given of the character of the British soldier." But Ruskin is not always a safe guide, and his praise is certainly high-pitched. John Strange Winter wrote vivaciously, with humour and sympathy; but the secret of her great popularity lay in the pretty sentiment with which she touched her tales; and sentimentality is always a sure road to the heart of the English public. Her talent never rose higher than that of the highly accomplished journalistic story-teller.

And, though one of her books is deserving of greater praise, pleasant sentiment is the distinguishing characteristic of Mrs. W. K. Clifford's novels. She always

writes sanely and sincerely, she is helped by a cultured knowledge of English life at home and abroad; her style is regular and well-formed; and she touches the chord of tender sentiment without undue exaggeration. A pleasant wholesomeness of thought, a slender theme skilfully elaborated into a long tale are the marks of her work. *Mrs. Keith's Crime* (1885), an early novel, contains more tragedy than is her wont; but the agonised delirium of the mother who prefers her ailing child to die with her, rather than be left to grow well among strangers, is intolerably extended, till the reader is more exhausted than impressed. *Aunt Anne* (1892), by far her best book, is the character-sketch of a pathetic figure, a dignified yet foolish and sentimental old woman deceived into marriage by an adventurer who hopes only for her money. The book is a remarkably fine study and a strong piece of writing; the foolish, tiresome, extravagant old woman remains in our imagination and elicits our pity as strongly as the figure of Père Goriot. *A Woman Alone* (1901), *The Modern Way* (1907) and Mrs. Clifford's other tales, whether novels or short stories, are distinctly secondary to *Aunt Anne*. *Sir George's Objection* (1910) may be taken as a pattern of the type. A charming girl's marriage prospects are clouded by a stain on her father's memory, but the situation clears in sunshine and happy tears. Such is the texture of the story; and of the like simple material her other books are made.

Mrs. W. K. Clifford.

Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick is also the authoress of a number of pleasant and skilfully written tales, chiefly negative in character. They are not realistically burdened with questions of the day, nor do they belong to the class that is wholly tame. *The Inner Shrine* (1900), *Cynthia's Way* (1901), *Anthea's Guest* (1911) and *Below Stairs* (1913) are typical of her manner; they provoke no thought or unrest, and they are written in an easy and excellent style.

Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick.

Miss Netta Syrett has also a pen that moves readily. She can write fairy-tales or edit gracefully for children without losing her power to construct books of a more

ambitious character. She delights to take for her plot-idea the eccentric or the child of genius faced with the unexpectedness of life. *Rosanne* (1902) and *Barbara of the Thorn* (1913) were written upon this motive; but far better, and indeed much the strongest of her novels, is *The Child of Promise* (1907), a tale distinguished by intellectual power, true feeling and vigorous humour.

Netta Syrett.

Miss Una L. Silberrad has less gift as a stylist and her method is sometimes crude, but she is observant, her characters live and her tales are marked by a kind of conscious energy. *The Good Comrade* (1907) is perhaps the best of her books, and of the others *The Wedding of the Lady of Lovel* (1905) and *Simon Rideout, Quaker* (1911) may be named.

Una L. Silberrad, b. 1872.

Among the latest to appear in the field of feminine fiction Miss Ethel Sidgwick is specially to be named. *Promise* (1910), an intricate study in the mind of a child and youth of genius was a remarkable first novel. If the character and story of the hero inevitably recalled M. Rolland's *Jean-Chrisophe*, the method of Miss Sidgwick was not that of the French writer, for she is without his sense of form, his wonderful sequence of movement in the study of a mind and his perfect clarity. *Le Gentleman* (1911) and *Herself* (1912) were also thoughtful novels, graced with charm, humour and unobtrusive satire; but it was not till Miss Sidgwick continued the story of Antoine Edgell in *Succession* (1913), the sequel to *Promise*, that she rivalled her first book. In this she adopted, as in all her previous tales, a setting half French, half English, and in a novel of more than average length she sustained unfalteringly an elaborate if somewhat distant and detached study of genius in conflict with the hard knocks of the world. In all her books she has shown a power of carrying forward the development of plot as much in the dialogue as in direct narrative. They are intellectually rather than imaginatively shaped, for, though her tales are not without pathos and sudden fire, she writes largely with the mind. Perhaps the failure of the finer feminine novel to reach the standard

Ethel Sidgwick, b. 1877.

of the greater novel written by man lies in an overplus of self-conscious intellectuality. George Eliot's failure as an artist is that she was too much the thinker; Jane Austen, on the other hand, the greatest novelist among Englishwomen, and Christina Rossetti, the greatest poetess, had no aggressive intellectuality.

The novel written by women in Ireland is not more characteristic than the novel written by men in the same country. Save in the matter of a superimposed local colour it has no marks that are peculiarly its own. It has not yet thrown in its part and lot with the Celtic Revival, and it is now probably too late to begin. Miss Jane Barlow's tales of peasant folk and gentry belong to Connemara. *Kerrigan's Quality* (1894) and *Flaws* (1911), rambling and loose novels of country life, serve to convince us that her true gift lies with the short story. *Irish Idylls* (1892), *A Creel of Irish Stories* (1897) and *From the Land of the Shamrock* (1901) are simple tales, written in a fine style and in a spirit of humour tinged with irony. Within the limits set these stories are admirable in their simple humanity and only injured by an unnecessarily laboured rendering of dialect.

Jane Barlow, b. 1860.

Katharine Tynan (Mrs. Hinkson) has written much pretty and sentimental verse, and her prose is likewise dreamy, poetical, graceful and sentimental by turns, but wanting in any suggestion of personality. She rarely fails to introduce a breath of poetry and quiet grace into her narrative, and as rarely has she any dramatic force or intensity. The early volume of short tales, *A Cluster of Nuts* (1894), has been followed by a continuous stream of novels and volumes of short stories, among which may be named more particularly *The Handsome Brandons* (1893), *A Daughter of the Fields* (1900), *The Story of Clarice* (1911) and *Honey, my Honey* (1912). The greater number of these tales and sketches of Irish life turn upon pleasant and agreeable themes—a girl sacrificed to the drudgery of farm labour finds a lover and a husband, the broken love affairs of two Irish girls of good family and their happy marriage in the close of events, these and other themes of a like nature Katharine

Katharine Tynan, b. 1861.

Tynan touches with wholesome sentiment. Her matter is never very full, she rings her changes upon a small scale of topics; but she has, at least, an attractive style and a gift of lending a gentle vein of poetry to her narrative.

Nora Hopper, 1871–1906.

If Nora Hopper (Mrs. Wilfrid Hugh Chesson) be placed here it can only be by an arbitrary arrangement and because in another chapter she must be named with the Irish poetesses. Her two novels, *The Bell and the Arrow* (1905) and *Father Felix's Chronicles*, published posthumously in 1907, in no way indicate the Irish origin of the authoress. The first is a love tale with a setting among the country gentry of Devonshire. It has the same prettiness as marks her verse, the same sense of pathos and undeveloped consciousness of the tragic. One character alone is not easily forgotten, that of Miss Dolores Tregennis, the simple-minded old maid who walks her way through life clouded by the tender and pretty melancholy of an early disappointment in love. *Father Felix's Chronicles*, a book written many years before publication, is an attempt to depict life in mediæval England in the words of a Benedictine monk. It can scarcely be regarded as a signal success in a difficult form of art.

E. Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross.

Beside these the work of two cousins, Miss Edith Œnone Somerville and Miss Violet Martin,[1] who write under the pen-name of E. Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross, may be briefly mentioned. They have written a number of sporting tales and humorous sketches of Irish life—*Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.* (1899), *Further Experiences of an Irish R.M.* (1903) and *All on the Irish Shore* (1903) are among their collected volumes—which are commendably written and vigorous if a little tiresome and laboured in humour. The spirit of these tales and their simple devices are as old as Lover.

The number of successful women novelists, those who by fiction can earn a large or modest competence, has perhaps already outstripped the number of men engaged in the same struggle. And in either case the quantity of good, but not distinctive or personal work produced is

[1] Miss Violet Martin died 1915.

remarkable. No purpose could be served in the attempt to survey a field so large; but three women writers who have for many years retained an astonishing popularity may be named before this chapter is brought to a close.

Ouida, 1840–1908.

Louise de la Ramée, who used the pseudonym Ouida, was born at Bury St. Edmunds, but spent the greater part of her later life at Florence. Her first story, printed when she was only twenty, appeared in a magazine; and from girlhood throughout life she continued to be a busy and energetic worker, although the years brought neither wisdom nor knowledge. Among her books may be mentioned *Strathmore* (1865), *Under Two Flags* (1867), *Moths* (1880) and *Princess Napraxine* (1884). All her tales are conducted with pace and energy, they are the work of a woman who was herself living to the full from day to day; but they are a glaring patchwork of faults in taste and style, and none has a vestige of literary merit. For many readers her appalling ignorance of even the commonest concerns of daily life and her amazing blunders formed the chief attraction of her work, while others accepted her glitter, tinsel and gaudy effects as a true picture of that unknown world where the aristocratic and wealthy misbehave.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon, 1837–1915.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon (Mrs. John Maxwell) was less gaudy and sensational, but hardly less melodramatic. A comedietta which was performed in 1860, poems and one or two early novels had little success. In 1862, however, *Lady Audley's Secret*, a thrilling murder story, ran through three editions in three months, and since the year of its appearance it has been continually reprinted. None of her succeeding books has been so immediately popular, but she never lost her hold upon a class of reader and almost each year of her life printed a new novel. Among the best are *Henry Dunbar* (1864), *Ishmael* (1884), *The Infidel* (1900) and *The Rose of Life* (1905), which are typical of the work of the accomplished writer for the railway bookstall.

Miss Marie Corelli takes herself more seriously, and in one or two books she has produced work of a better order than the last-named two writers. She has reached

beyond to that section of readers who enjoy in fiction religious topics touched with an air of novelty that is not too dangerous, thus pandering to their petty dissatisfactions with the vicar, the local minister or the wicked lives of the idle rich. And if style, character-drawing from observation and experience, knowledge and thought, as distinguished from prejudice and emotionalism, are matters of no moment, the overwhelmingly serious prose-moralities of Miss Corelli must doubtless seem impressive documents. Her first book, *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), brought her the popularity she has easily sustained. Novel after novel has been published in an enormous first edition and followed by a continuous stream of reprints. If Miss Corelli is a prophet she is not without honour in her own country, for her most successful books have been noisy indictments of contemporary religion or morality. *The Mighty Atom* (1896) reveals the folly of educating children without religion, lest they should hang themselves to discover whether a dead friend has gone to heaven. *Wormwood* (1890) paints in lurid colours, to a race which is in no danger of adopting the habit, the horrors of absinthe drinking. *The Master Christian* (1900) calls the churches to judgment and finds them wanting; and *God's Good Man* (1904) shows the clergyman as he ought to be.

Marie Corelli, b. 1864.

If in imaginative and literary quality there be anything to choose between Miss Corelli's novels, perhaps *Temporal Power* (1902) may be regarded as the best in her work. Her melodramatic moral tales, though preposterous in matter, have probably worked no harm in themselves; they may certainly have done something to lower the standard of taste for readers who were unable to recognise under a parade of novelty a complete absence of originality, grotesque travesty of social life, and a slipshod style full of inaccuracies and gross solecisms.

CHAPTER V

A NOTE ON AMERICAN NOVELISTS

Henry James—W. D. Howells—F. Marion Crawford—G. W. Cable—James Lane Allen—Harold Frederic—Mary Eleanor Wilkins—'Charles Egbert Craddock'—Thomas Nelson Page—Ellen Glasgow—Owen Wister—Frank Norris—Upton Sinclair—Winston Churchill—Robert Herrick—Ambrose Bierce—Jack London—Mrs. Atherton—Kate Douglas Wiggin—Mrs. Wharton.

SINCE the great Civil War, which marked the beginning of a new and more national phase in American literature, the divergence between the fiction of the United States and that of the Older World has become more pronounced. It is not too much to say that a great proportion of the better-read people of this country will find themselves more at home in a novel by Tolstoy, Matilde Serao, André Gide or Anatole France than they will in a tale of American life by Mr. W. D. Howells, Mr. G. W. Cable or Frank Norris. Paris, rather than London or New York, is the meeting-place of people of English descent from either side of the Atlantic. If American literature in the first place, as was inevitable, imitated the English pattern, within the last twenty or thirty years Russian realism, German awkwardness, French logic and constructive instinct have counted for more and more. Thackeray and Dickens have not been forgotten, but Maupassant, Zola, Tolstoy have been more powerful influences in shaping the writing of some American novelists of the older and many of the younger generation. Nevertheless the last accusation which can be brought against American fiction in its latest versions is that it is purely derivative; for, like Walt Whitman, the novelists of the United States have awakened to a racial and territorial consciousness. A few have been led away by the delusion, from which they would have been saved by the smallest knowledge of the history of literature in the past, that the practice of letters should aim at an indifferent cosmopolitanism.

Nothing has been gained and much has been lost by those who have attempted to practise the art of fiction under the guidance of this mistaken theory. Marion Crawford and Henry James may have written better in describing the life of the Older World than when they put their hand to the painting of American manners, but this is only because they both lost touch with their country after a lifetime spent outside its borders. Neither writer is in any strict sense American. On the other hand it is America, both in its limitations and its spaciousness, which has fostered and nourished the work of the most notable among novelists of the United States from Mr. Howells to Frank Norris and Mr. Winston Churchill. Mr. Howells, despite his travels and his many years of life in Europe, remains a typical American.

American literature, apart from an immense outpouring of Calvinistic and theological writings, begins with the nineteenth century, with the beginning of a national life and a consciousness of unity in the States. And for many years thereafter it contented itself, more markedly than the literature of the mother country, with variations upon standard themes and exercises. American fiction was born with the early tales and novels of Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper; and these are now scarcely a century old. In Irving the debt to Addison and Goldsmith is not concealed, and the imaginative romances of Cooper owe much to Scott. Almost a quarter of a century later is to be placed the work of two far greater and more original writers of fiction, Hawthorne and Poe. The latter owed little to America; he satirised its democratic complacency, he had neither part nor lot with the then predominant New England transcendentalism. The genius of Hawthorne was more typically an outcome of the age and the country; and perhaps few will contest the statement that *The Scarlet Letter* is the greatest, the most individual in character of all American novels. It appeared in 1850, the year following Poe's death, and falling thus midway in the century it marks a neutral period, which passed, after the Civil War, into another more pronouncedly national, in which the American writer became conscious of the immense size of his country, of its many physical and racial interests, characteristics and peculiarities. The

novel definitely invested with a local atmosphere, New England, Virginian, Middle West, Californian or Southern, has overshadowed the older and less localised type of narrative.

Many writers of the localised or dialect tale and novel have been content to represent realistically or romantically the life of a state or district—Mr. Cable and Mrs. Freeman are pertinent examples of writers whose aim goes no further. But younger writers have been fascinated by the immense size and teeming life of the States, and narrative with an environment set in Chicago, Philadelphia or California has been violently forced to its highest power, till an episode or conjunction of circumstances is treated as symbolically significant of the whole life of the country or certain aspects of it. The suggestion or inspiration to attempt this type of novel comes, it is needless to say, from Zola. Typical American novels built upon this formula are Frank Norris's *Octopus*, Mr. Upton Sinclair's *Jungle* and Mrs. Atherton's *Ancestors*. In no case is the attempt altogether successful: what is true of Zola is true of these and other American writers—the novel is successful despite the incubus of a big abstract idea, because the author can forget it and show us living men and women fighting with the circumstances of their individual lives. Although the "big idea" has become an obsession for many among younger American novelists, in itself it is of no account in any attempt to judge the intrinsic value of their work, which rests upon something else, just as the novels of Tolstoy, Dostoievsky and Zola will endure for other reasons than the heavily-emphasised social or philosophic conceptions upon which they are sometimes built.

Contemporaneously with attempts to write the big and symbolic novel we find the United States becoming more and more the land of the short story, for which the immediate return is often good and the demand of the numberless magazines is great. The short story has, perhaps, always been the most popular form of fiction in America, as witness the tales of Washington Irving Bret Harte and Poe. And if, with the exception of Poe, the standard has never been as high as the best contemporaneous writing of Russia, France and England, the United States has latterly produced many exceptionally

fine writers of the short story. It is only necessary to name Mr. Ambrose Bierce, 'O. Henry,' Jack London and Miss Murfree.

It seemed better in preceding chapters to include with the English one or two writers by nationality American. Henry Harland, for example, cannot easily be dissociated from the *Yellow Book* and a well-defined group of English writers ; and one or two women writers, by birth American, have been included with the authoresses of this country, because they have been largely denationalised and write almost entirely under the influence of English or European ideals and habits of thought. As much, at least, is true of Henry James, who, if he cannot be said to have lost touch with the land of his birth, certainly finds a more fruitful region for study, in his own peculiar method of psychological analysis, in the complex, traditional and leisured life of an older society. And his influence upon English novelists has probably been greater than any he has exercised upon American writers. It would, therefore, have been natural to include him in one of the preceding chapters, had this not involved too gross an example of kidnapping, and, at the same time, obscured the fact that in certain traits he still remains definitely an American.[1] His influence has been so great, his name stands for so much, especially in those years properly within the purview of this book, that no apology is needed for writing more fully of Henry James than of other American writers in a chapter which only professes to be a note and a brief summary.

Henry James, 1843–1916.

A literary gift and a psychological habit of mind would appear to be hereditary in the family of Henry James. His father was a well-known American theologian, his elder brother the eminent psychologist and pragmatic philosopher, William James. He received a varied education in New York, in England and France, and in 1862 he was studying law at Harvard. But the law was soon abandoned for literature. He began by writing short stories in the *Atlantic Monthly* and other periodicals ; and between 1871 and the year of his death

[1] Shortly after the outbreak of war, 1914, Henry James, in order to show his sympathy with the cause of the Entente, took out papers of naturalization as a British subject.

he published between forty and fifty volumes of essays, biography, criticism and fiction.

Henry James's early tales contain the promise of his later novels, but they do not obviously exhibit the peculiar characteristics which the average reader associates with his work. They are distinguished by the gracefulness of their style, by simplicity of construction and coherence of plot. The movement of the narrative is never swift, yet it neither flags nor hesitates. The meeting of people of the New World with the complicated social barriers of the old is a common basis for many of these early tales. It appears in *Roderick Hudson* (1875) and its sequel, *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), in *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1878), *An International Episode* (1879) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). In these books and in that clear and perfect piece of art, *The Aspern Papers* (1888), the style is simple, contrasts of character are directly presented, and there is little suggestion of the prolix elaboration which belongs to his later novels. The early work betrays a writer pre-eminently subtle and psychological; but the extreme complexity of the later books is scarcely indicated. *The Aspern Papers* and *The Finer Grain* (1910) might well be by two different writers. *The Bostonians* (1886), a novel of the middle period, is transitional in its characteristics; the prolixity of the later work begins to appear in this long novel of Boston society, its ideals, its loves and its grey Puritanism. *The Tragic Muse* (1890) also belongs to the time of transition during which Henry James was evolving that complete and rounded form of fiction which had been his aim and ideal from the early years, when he wrote simple and intellectually distinctive stories under the influence of Turgenieff, Flaubert and Balzac, "the master of us all."

He began his third period with *What Maisie Knew* (1897), an exquisite picture of the awakening of moral sense in a child brought up in an ill-regulated atmosphere of contact with men and women of a world where the ethical standard is low. In this novel he fulfilled the aim, pertinaciously pursued through years, of reaching further than Balzac in the creation of the novel of atmosphere. It was not enough for Henry James to recreate the moral and social atmosphere surrounding

his characters, he wished to place them in a circumambient fluid of the total consciousness of all the persons of a tale. It was thus necessary that each novel should be imagined as a whole, rounded and complete, the content and form inseparable, and fiction given, as Mr. Morton Fullerton has well expressed it, the character of a plastic art. "The architect, the painter, the sculptor, the actor, the servants of all but the two muses of music and literature, have at their disposal signs and materials which make plasticity an essential result. To arrive at the same result in prose literature is the mark of the highest art. Mr. James has achieved it in his later books, from *The Ambassadors* to *The Golden Bowl*, and it is this achievement which makes them, in spite of the more accessible charm of his earlier novels, the significant and original part of his work."[1] Whether Henry James's performance was commensurate with his intention is a question that may be waived for the moment. Mr. Fullerton well expresses the aim; and he is justified in asserting that the later novels are "the significant and original part of his work," for in these, both in style and method, everything has been changed, and, though imitators may be discovered, a parallel to Henry James in prose fiction is not to be found. From the simple form of narrative, which is a chronicle in the third person by a *spectator ab extra*, he has moved forward, with clear purpose and knowledge of his powers, to narrative which is a record within the consciousness of one or more actors in the same drama; and by this method he hoped not only to frame his figures but to set them within life and make us feel the intensity of life. For with all artists, great or little, Henry James was in love with life as he understood it; and he loved London, the capital city of the Anglo-Saxon race, because it is "the particular spot in the world which communicates the greatest sense of life." That life, in his sense of the word, is a small and narrow country many will be disposed to assert; for the world of men and women untouched by the conventionalities of a hyper-civilisation lay outside his interest and attention. Life for him was the intercourse of sophisticated beings in those gracious, leisurely and ample surroundings which are the

[1] *Quarterly Review*, April, 1910.

heritage of centuries of culture, art and wealth. There are indeed hints of another world discernible in his novels, but they are no more than meaningless sounds from the pit where the groundlings are herded. A minute fraction of the human race has first-hand knowledge of the social plane which the novels of Henry James describe. If, however, his range is narrow, it is adequate within its sphere, and no more can be asked of any man. Mr. Hardy's range is equally narrow, but it is nearer to the substance and stuff of life so carefully wrapped away in the conventionalised beings of Henry James's novels. Mr. Hardy in his narrowness is far more significant than Henry James, for he pierces to what man is in the last issue, while the latter shows man as he has made or is trying to remake himself. But neither of these has the range of Balzac, Tolstoy and Thackeray, who can speak of all things from the gross mind of the scullion and the peasant to the megrims of the intellectual and the prayers of the mystic.

Henry James ranges across the surface veneer modern civilisation has painted in thick coatings upon the natural man, and marks its pattern, noting occasionally a few cracks and inequalities, but he carefully refrains from scraping away the lacquer to examine the nature of the substance upon which it is painted. It may be answered that it is of little moment whether a beautifully lacquered box is of wood or metal, the significance of the box is the art of the painter. And it can be admitted that if boxes be only art specimens for a museum the answer suffices. But for many the original use of boxes for the storing of food or belongings cannot be forgotten. And life as we see it in Henry James's novels has too much the air of a museum of art exhibits, where all is expensive, ordered, hushed, set apart from the common ways of the street, where the greater world that sins and suffers presses on past the doors making the art of the future for another generation of connoisseurs and virtuosi to inspect beneath glass frames. The personalities of Henry James's novels are a finished and sterile product of life rather than life in the being. And it follows that his psychology is superficial. It is commonly believed, on the contrary, that no writer has probed so deeply into

the secrets of the human soul. The reverse of this belief seems to be nearer the truth. "In Mr. James's work," says Mr. Scott-James, "we feel too often that the people are extensive; seldom that they are intensive. They may have been analysed to the last degree; so that we come to know more *about* them, but we do not always see deeply into them."[1]

The evolution of Henry James's work into the characteristics of the third period is the outcome of definite and long-considered theory upon the nature of the art of fiction. As early as 1866, as an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* shows, he had begun seriously to consider the aims and difficulties of the novelist. With unwearying intellectual enthusiasm and with high faith in himself he continued to work upon his theories and toward his ideals, until he slowly evolved the novel in which narrative and character are reflected within the consciousness of the persons of the tale. The more important novels and volumes of short stories belonging to this period of Henry James's writing are *What Maisie Knew*, *The Awkward Age* (1899), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Golden Bowl* (1904), *The Finer Grain* (1910) and *The Outcry* (1911). In these the general theme of the earlier novels, the clash of the new world with the old, is abandoned and replaced by complex studies of ethical and social reactions against the prim and sentimental spirit of the Victorian age. Nor is the moral absent; in Henry James's belief the moral is an important element of fiction; the moral, that is, in a broader connotation, for to dispute the moral and immoral is to reduce art to the inane. The moral sense of a work of art depends "on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it." These novels are not merely ethical and social studies; they are reflections of a sum-total of atmosphere and an attempt to seize points of view.

The results of Henry James's work are explained by the method of his approach. With many writers the first consideration is a plot. Henry James followed the method of Turgenieff and began with a personality. In his preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*—his most illuminating pronouncement upon his own art—he says:

[1] *Modernism and Romance*, p. 92

> "I was myself so much more antecedently conscious of my figures than of their setting . . . I might envy, though I couldn't emulate, the writer so constituted as to see his fable first and to make out its agents afterwards. I could think so little of any fable that didn't need its agents positively to launch it; I could think so little of any situation that didn't depend for its interest on the nature of the persons situated, and thereby on their way of taking it."

In other words, the narrative is never seen directly either by the author or the reader, but seen only as lived and felt by persons in the situations of the drama. Everything is apprehended on the mental and psychic plane, nothing is seen in the concrete and physical. Not in style, nor even in theory is Henry James set apart from other novelists, but in the completeness with which he removes narrative from the physical world to the mental. A suggestion of comparison between Henry James and George Meredith is often offered for reflection. The comparison is insignificant. Meredith had little sense of environing atmosphere, his background is meagre, and his psychology is far more intensive than that of Henry James, comprehending man as a creature of intellect, spiritual emotion and the impulses of the flesh: the typical novels of Henry James are scarcely more than a presentation of surface psychology and atmosphere.

Each individual exposes to the world mental characteristics of extreme complexity, characteristics which have, nevertheless, little play in the inner depths of the conscious and subconscious life; they are not the substance of personality but the surface shimmer, the ripple moving across the face of the waters. So much each man must reveal in order to take his part in the interactions of social life; and the greater the tangle of the environment the larger will be the surface exposed. With the surface play of mental phenomena Henry James was so engrossed that he appeared to have forgotten that the earth is a globe and not an extended plane. No writer has shown a more highly developed faculty for following in two dimensions the conflict of diverse characters and minds. But not infrequently in real life each individual reveals to a few of his or her kind the fountains of the great deep;

in the novels of Henry James never, or scarcely ever. He wraps even the passion of love in a cloistral and studious sedateness. Jane Austen could not have written as primly of Lord Warburton's proposal to Isabel Archer. Decorum was never more distressfully observed. The love passages of *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl* are not without a subdued beauty, but the pale cast of thought chills each scene. The writing of Henry James is tense, but not intense. Through hundreds of pages we grope after the mind of Maisie, Isabel Archer or Kate Croy; and in the end we ask: What did *they* know, or we about them? Henry James studies every mind as if it were a wide and shallow pool; and if this be an apt analogy for many, there are other minds more comparable to the deep river ever flowing onward.

As the range of his study in the ramifications of mental phenomena extended itself Henry James adopted a style so verbose and involved that he excited against himself the outcries Meredith had faced before him. His earlier manner, save for occasional lapses, was clear, graceful, brief. Only occasionally was he guilty of the affected circumlocutions which became characteristic of his later style. For the most part his writing is subdued, even old-maidish. The following passage from *The Portrait of a Lady* reminds us of Jane Austen in one of her worst moments, or Fanny Burney in her transitional manner.

> "He carried out his resolve with a great deal of tact, and the young lady found in renewed contact with him no obstacle to the exercise of her genius for unshrinking inquiry, the general application of her confidence. Her situation at Gardencourt therefore, appreciated as we have seen her to be by Isabel and full of appreciation herself of that free play of intelligence which, to her sense, rendered Isabel's character a sister-spirit, and of the easy venerableness of Mr. Touchett, whose noble tone, as she said, met with her full approval—her situation at Gardencourt would have been perfectly comfortable had she not conceived an irresistible mistrust of the little lady for whom she had at first supposed herself obliged to 'allow' as mistress of the house."

In this and many other passages of Henry James's early and late style we are struck by nothing so much as the curiously well-bred maiden-lady manner: even when he writes of the vices of modern Babylons, or of irregular sexual relationships, it is in a manner so veiled and distantly suggestive that we barely recognise them for what they are. And the habit grew with him; till he developed in his later books that indirect allusiveness coupled with the constant effort to present narrative from a "point of view," which has produced that involved, prolix and metaphorical style, the despair of the uninitated unless aided by essays offering "light on darkest James." If Henry James was fond of the metaphor and often used it with effect, it cannot be regarded as the life and soul of his style, as it was with Meredith. Rather his style may be described as allusive, the style of accumulative hints and half-formed suggestions. By this means he tried to reproduce a similitude of life's experience; for knowledge gained of experience is a knowledge of accumulated small detail. The knowledge of a friend's character is gained slowly and by scattered hints—no man may reveal himself entirely to his fellows, however long his life, least of all can we hope to learn the whole of a man's character in a single flash of divination. And Henry James, realising this, attempted to develop to an extreme, the method used by Balzac and Thackeray—the method of allusiveness.

Were life lived in a single key Henry James's manner might be adequate. It is not. In a great crisis a man lives and reveals himself more fully than he can in a score of commonplace years. And it is this Henry James's narrative fails to convey; there is as little difference between his light and shade as exists between night and day in an English midwinter. The note is too even. The page shines with a dim and uncertain light; and we are led to sympathise with Mr. George Moore's dictum, that throughout a long book he flutters in vain after the right word, never finding it.

It may be questioned, furthermore, whether the involved style is necessary to the aim of his later work. There is nothing in his last novels which is not reached in *The Portrait of a Lady*. He would have done

well to preserve the sedate and gentle simplicity of that earlier book.

But a general review of the work of Henry James presses home upon us the admission that in two important aspects his novels, especially those which belong to the close of the last and the beginning of this century, have exercised a remarkable influence in carrying forward the story of prose fiction in its evolution. Stress has been laid upon his endeavour to write the novel from a "point of view"; and in this no one has yet rivalled him. Furthermore, in a few of the novels, unduly long as they may seem on a first reading, we must recognise his noteworthy success in conceiving a single situation in the form of a narrative which is one picture. Unity of conception combined with unity of form is characteristic of such books as *The Portrait of a Lady*, *What Maisie Knew*, *The Golden Bowl*, *The Outcry* and *The Ambassadors*. Of the last Henry James said, "I am able to estimate this as, frankly, quite the best 'all round' of my productions." The story is based on a favourite theme worked out in a manner pre-eminently typical of the author. A New England mother, distressed on hearing of the entanglement of a son in Paris, dispatches an elderly friend to save the boy. The gradual discovery by this emissary of the beautiful character of the woman who has gained an ascendency over the young American provides the author with an admirable diploma subject. And the whole, despite the length of the book, is conceived and presented in unity. The same judgment applies with equal force to the slight and brief comedy of the conflict between the American art collector and the English owner of pictures contained in *The Outcry*.

Henry James shrank from the brutal vulgarity of the event, he avoided a psychology which is personal and direct; his characters drift in reflections across the mirror of other minds, and in his typical novels we never see them in the flesh. His world is a magic mirror of innumerable facets and angles in which we can no more than catch fleeting and changeful glimpses of individuals as they pass. Apart from the two theoretical guides already indicated—the positing of the "point of view" and the attempt to render fiction a plastic art—Henry James's later

manner was the result of an effort to paint new characteristics of English social life which emerged in the closing years of the last century, to present a peculiarly modern world. In this he showed a remarkable faculty of keeping abreast of the younger generation; his later writing is more original than his earlier and has left marks that are widely traceable in the work of living English writers of the novel.

William Dean Howells, b. 1837.

In this country the name of Mr. William Dean Howells has never been one to conjure with, he has never established a cult or an enthusiasm like Henry James; yet twenty years ago it seemed natural to call him the chief of American novelists. The reason of his slight significance here and his very considerable effect upon American fiction is intelligible. Though a born man of letters Mr. Howells has never revealed any peculiar originality or power. Whatever his work had to offer could reach English writers by a shorter and more direct route. His method is that of the realists, especially that of Balzac and the Russian novelists. He attempts to render life in all its commonplaceness, yet to reveal the importance of the commonplace. He essays an exact representation of the American scene, avoiding all high lights, elaborate analysis or the introduction of matter extraneous to his picture. His end is clear and consistent presentation of the actual fact. He has thus set the standard of the subdued and colourless narrative; and his instinctive rightness as an observer and a stylist has enabled him to influence the American novel of quiet manners and slight individual interest in a degree it would be difficult to over-estimate.

Mr. Howells had been for some twelve years or more a poet, journalist, editor, biographer and topographical writer before he published his first novel, *Their Wedding Journey*, in 1871. *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889) and *The Quality of Mercy* (1892) are among the best of the many tales which have succeeded it. It may be that the ideal Mr. Howells has set before himself in these and other typical novels has been too constantly in his mind. Reserve, subdued lights, the wholly impersonal manner have resulted in an arid

clearness which empties life of much of its zest, joy and stronger reality. It is certain that the sources of his inspiration have long shown a tendency to run dry. He has hardly again equalled *The Rise of Silas Lapham.* Many of his tales seem to be written as experiments in calculated monotony. Plot in the ordinary sense he avoids sedulously, the only story he offers is some account of what happens to his people and a glimpse into their emotions. He does not want for humour and a delicate fantasy, but idealism and romance he eschews; the ideal and perfect character, as he does not perceive it in life, is excluded from his books. Nevertheless, though his influence has sunk, as editor, cicerone and novelist he has done much to shape the writing of younger men in his country.

Francis Marion Crawford, 1854–1909.

Like Henry James, Francis Marion Crawford, though of American parentage, owed little to the country of his citizenship. He was born in Italy and educated in England and Germany as well as in America, he first took to literature as the editor of the Allahabad *Indian Herald*, he lived the greater part of his life in Italy, and he made clever use of his cosmopolitan experience in the groundwork of his many novels. His least successful books were his novels of American life, among them *An American Politician* (1886); for he had little real acquaintance with the United States and wrote of the country at second hand. His first novel, *Mr. Isaacs* (1882), was a story of modern India and Oriental theosophy. It was quickly followed by many others in which, it is not unjust to say, Marion Crawford's chief purpose was to entertain. He set himself to cultivate the art of telling a story in an interesting manner, he became in technique an admirable story-teller, but he paid the price in the gradual conventionalization of his plots and characters. His literary ideals he has frankly avowed in *The Novel—What It Is* (1893); and there is no need to go further than his own confession for a just estimate of the value of his work. He disclaims classification with the realists or romantic writers, believing that the best type of novel should contain elements both of romanticism and realism, he deprecates the novel

with a purpose, save a purpose which leads the reader to think thoughts "not too serious," he accepts the fact that the novelist, if he treats moral questions, should remember that many of his readers will be young girls, and the function of the novelist he summarises finally as the making of "pocket-theatres out of words," that is to say, novels should be portable dramas. It will be seen that Marion Crawford did not pitch his standard in any mood of high seriousness, and this was, so far, well. He was among the unfortunates who reach their ideal because they reach within their grasp.

The loss of his mother's fortune, when he was yet a young man, put Marion Crawford under the necessity of earning his living: it was incumbent upon him to be popular, and he succeeded. His opportunities were many: he had received an excellent and varied education, he had been born into an atmosphere of art (his father was the sculptor, Thomas Crawford), he had enjoyed the blessings of money and ease, he was by native gift an industrious and rapid worker. Of the many tales he published, the best, with one or two exceptions, were novels of Italian life. Italy and the Italians he knew intimately, and in this he was greatly assisted by the fact that he had joined the Roman Catholic Church. The ambitious semi-historical trilogy *Saracinesca* (1887), *Sant' Ilario* (1889) and *Don Orsino* (1892), was indebted to his knowledge of modern Rome. It illustrates his gift of creating characters sufficiently real to satisfy the reader who is not too critical, and of placing them in manufactured situations which are neither sensational nor preposterous. None of his other tales of Italy fails in style, interest and dramatic quality, and none rises above the level of secondary fiction. In addition to these the fanciful and sentimental *Cigarette Maker's Romance* (1890) deserves to be named for its style, its vivid imaginativeness and the skilful handling of its plot.

Perhaps Marion Crawford was happy in being aware of his limitations. He drew upon his varied experience with ease and grace, he wrote with reserve and good taste, his characters were romantic but not injudiciously so, his plots were conventional but they were not beaten out too thin. He was one of the best possible examples of the skilled and gentlemanly craftsman in the art of

fiction. And in fiction alone was he really successful; his monographs on Italian history are ill-arranged, and, despite the dramatic character of his novels, he failed as a writer for the stage.

The most characteristic novels of two of the writers just named have little or no relationship to American life; those of Mr. Howells on the other hand, are certainly typical of the life and habits of thought of the country from which they come; but they betray also the influence of European models and standards, and Mr. Howells' method was set over forty years ago and has not changed appreciably since. His appeal is not primarily, like that of Henry James, to the present generation of readers and writers. It has been said that the end of the Civil War marked the beginning of a new and more national phase in American fiction, a period which has seen a prolific outpouring of the regional and dialect novel; and in this particular development Marion Crawford, Henry James and Mr. Howells have played no special part. In a large number of cases writers of the regional novel have set themselves to describe types and phases of social life destroyed by the war, or fated soon to disappear. Among the first to be conscious of the charm of a past which was quickly fading was Mr. George Washington Cable, who served in the Confederate Army, and at the close of the war returned to settle in New Orleans, the city of his birth. He was drawn into journalism and first made a reputation by sketches and tales of French-American and Creole life. Several of these tales were collected in 1879 under the title of *Old Creole Days*, and there followed other books—*The Grandissimes* (1880), *Madame Delphine* (1881), *Dr. Sevier* (1883) and *Bonaventure* (1888)—in which, in a spirit of realism touched with humour, he sketched the life of the south. Mr. Cable has no exceptional gifts, but he has written many charming scenes, the poetry of the south is in his pages, he has a good and unpretentious style, and his novels have a large element of historical value in putting upon record old days and old ways in New Orleans. In *The Grandissimes* and *Dr. Sevier* he produced faithful and discerning pictures of a type of

George Washington Cable, b. 1844.

character and social life. Unfortunately these tales and his history, *The Creoles of Louisiana* (1884), gave offence to the people they described, and Mr. Cable left the south to settle in New England.

James Lane Allen, b. 1849.

Mr. James Lane Allen, a writer better known to most readers in this country, is also drawn toward the romantic past. After spending a number of years teaching in schools and academies he began to write sketches of the "Blue Grass" district of his native Kentucky, and continued with stories of a graceful and sentimental character. Among these are *A Kentucky Cardinal* (1894), *Aftermath* (1895), *The Choir Invisible* (1897) and *The Increasing Purpose* (1900). Nearly all Mr. Allen's writing suffers from stylistic self-consciousness; in his later books he loses something of his earlier simplicity and even abandons himself to mere verbiage. *The Choir Invisible*, a tale of the early settlement of Kentucky, has, however, an undercurrent of stronger feeling and is built upon firmer foundations than his other books. In this historical romance he has been able to restrain the self-conscious manner and nervous sentimentality which are characteristic of him.

Harold Frederic, 1856–1898.

Harold Frederic made a name for himself as a chronicler of rural life in the state of New York after he had become London correspondent of the *New York Times* and settled in England. Frederic was as instinctively a satirist as Mr. Allen is a graceful sentimentalist. His first novel of any importance was *Seth's Brother's Wife* (1887). This was followed by *The Lawton Girl* (1890) and *The Copperhead* (1894), a story of the Civil War. But his powers of ironical insight into the failings and pettiness of human nature were best illustrated in *Illumination* (1896) and *Gloria Mundi* (1898). *Illumination* (called in America, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*) was a realistic, witty and satirical picture of religious life in the American shopkeeper class. By far Frederic's best book, it is hardly a gracious document; it was unlikely to mend the objects of its satire and it gave the indifferent ground for derision. It is brilliantly clever, but with a superficial cleverness. *Gloria Mundi*, a story of

English upper-class life, is by no means as vivid; nor does it bear good witness to Frederic's spontaneity and abundance of ironical humour. *Illumination* was his one striking book; exaggerated perhaps, but full of insight and matter.

The stories contained in *A Humble Romance* (1887) first brought Mary Eleanor Wilkins (Mrs. C. M. Freeman) into prominence as an annalist of life in rural New England. The first was succeeded by a number of other volumes of short stories. Her tales involve no great problems, they turn upon simple and pathetic love themes, upon misunderstandings, upon the history of bygone New England, but they all manifest a fine sense of economy in the portrayal of character, and each narrative is skilfully and firmly rounded. In the last-named characteristic her novels, with the possible exception of *The Shoulders of Atlas* (1907), will hardly compare with the short stories. They are too slight in motive and might better have been told in briefer compass. Mrs. Freeman is not a daring and original, but she is a careful and observant writer, studying with sympathy the humdrum lives of the middle class and the poor.

Mary Eleanor Wilkins, b. 1862.

A more vigorous character distinguishes the local and dialect tales of 'Charles Egbert Craddock' (Miss Mary Noailles Murfree). Her stories of the mountain people of Tennessee were first contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly*, and suggested by their force in the description of rough and simple life that they came from the hand of a man rather than a woman. In 1884 early stories were collected under the title *In the Tennessee Mountains*, and this collection has since been followed by others to a large extent dealing with that corner of the American continent which Miss Murfree best knows.

Charles Egbert Craddock, b. 1850.

Mr. Thomas Nelson Page and Miss Ellen Glasgow are two writers who come from the south and write of Virginia. *In Ole Virginia* (1887) was Mr. Page's first volume to attract attention, and this was followed by *Elsket* (1891), *Pastime Stories* (1894), *Bred in the Bone* (1904), and various volumes of short stories, which have the merit of sketching with knowledge and humour the amenities of

Thomas Nelson Page, b. 1853.

Virginian life before the character of the land was changed by the disasters of the Civil War.

Ellen Glasgow, b. 1874.

Miss Ellen Glasgow is a more ambitious writer; her narrative commonly embodies, in one form or another, the conflict between the older aristocratic life of Virginia and the new democratic ideals forced upon it by defeat. *The Deliverance* (1904) is a story of this type. And the difficulties of a new period, as they are illustrated in the relationship of men and women of differing social caste and ideals, appear in the much finer *Romance of a Plain Man* (1909) and *The Miller of Old Church* (1911). *Virginia* (1913) scarcely opens out any new vein in plot or idea, nor does it serve to induce an enhanced belief in Miss Glasgow's powers for those who know her already. She is undeniably a gifted and thoughtful writer who can give life to her characters and set her people within an atmosphere, the atmosphere of social convention, work and leisured idleness in new-old Virginia.

Owen Wister, b. 1860.

Mr. Owen Wister has written in differing veins and of differing scenes, but his typical tales relate the romance of cowboy life in the west. To this class belong the stories of the early *Jimmyjohn Boss* (1900) and the late *Members of the Family* (1911). But his two books of some importance are his one full-length novel, *The Virginian* (1902) and the short fantasy, *Lady Baltimore* (1906). These two are of an entirely different character, the former a story of cowboy life, the latter a piece of psychology betraying the influence of Henry James. *The Virginian* is, in its separate chapters, a series of sketches rather than a novel; but it is well sustained by ease in narration, a humour that is delightful and unforced and an excellent style.

Frank Norris, 1870–1902.

Mr. Hardy, in England, confines his scene to one small county or little more, yet he invests the story of obscure lives with a meaning bounded only by the mystery of the whence and wither of the whole race of man. And this he achieves not by force of the unshrinking realism commonly attributed to him, but because he conceives a story written in prose as the world-poet con-

ceives the drama of existence mirrored in the *sturm und drang* of a few souls. The American writers named above localise their scenes in accord with individual knowledge and familiarity, and for the most part (Miss Glasgow is something of an exception) seek no more than the faithful rendering of ordinary life in one or another corner of the United States. Others, sometimes perhaps influenced by Mr. Hardy, more often by Zola, see in the experience of the individual or a group of persons a national or world drama. They begin not with the men and women, but with a large social or ethical conception, and weave their story to illustrate or enforce their theme. Among writers thus actuated Frank Norris is, perhaps, first to be named; for his books are a typical example of the novel with a "big idea." He drew attention to himself with the forcible and realistic *McTeague* (1899); but all his powers were thrown into an incomplete trilogy, *The Octopus* (1901), *The Pit* (1903), and *The Wolf* which was planned though never written. The three were to form an epic of wheat from the time of its sowing in California, through its distribution at Chicago to its consumption in Europe. The novels were conceived on a large scale, the basic idea was full of possibilities, and Frank Norris almost succeeded in *The Octopus* and *The Pit* in making wheat, like some vast symbol or brooding destiny, enshroud the story. But he just came short of complete success. The power of the wheat is not inwoven in the texture of the narrative, it is paraded in set passages; and the littleness of man, who is no more than a mote or an insect subservient to the world-drama of food production, is flung upon us, it is hammered in, we are not made instinctively to feel it. Frank Norris was possessed of great imaginative daring, he was an exceptionally powerful writer, but he was, at the same time, a young man, and the fulfilment of his intention lay beyond him. Furthermore, in the matter of style and method he had much to learn. In narrative and diction he was prone to extravagance and bombast, and he was troubled with monotonous tricks of style—one of the most frequent is the noun followed by three adjectives—which recur on almost every page. *The Pit* hinted that he would outgrow these faults and the belief that big and clumsy words make

for strength and fine writing. Had Norris lived he would almost undoubtedly have produced work better by far than any he has left behind him.

Upton Sinclair, b. 1878.

Mr. Upton Sinclair has attempted something like the same largeness of theme in *The Jungle* (1906), a novel which has overshadowed his other books. It is a story of Chicago stockyards, of conflict between labour and capital, of injustice, of political swindling. Mr. Upton Sinclair can paint individual scenes and characters forcibly, but in this and other tales, *The Overman* (1907), *Love's Pilgrimage* (1911) and *Sylvia* (1913), the bias of the author, his socialistic creed, his theory of the relation of the sexes is too obtrusive, the spirit of the *ex parte* tract vitiates the narrative. Mr. Sinclair is too much a special pleader and man of theories to be a good artist; although in one book, undoubtedly, despite a large element of sensationalism, he has succeeded in drawing some living characters.

Winston Churchill, b. 1871.

Mr. Winston Churchill's later books suggest that he has set himself the task of covering the whole ground of American life, politics, marriage and religion. He began, however, as a writer of romances. *Richard Carvel* (1899) is a disconnected and somewhat shapeless historical tale with a scene laid partly in Maryland and partly in England. *The Crisis* (1901), a story of the Civil War, and *The Crossing* (1904), in which the fictitious element is set against an account of the early conquest of Kentucky and Tennessee, are also romances, carefully and elaborately written but loose and straggling in structure. From these Mr. Churchill turned to a more serious representation of his country. *Coniston* (1906), a tale of political jobbery in New England, despite the traces of laboured care loses nothing in the vitality of its character-portrayal, and the plot is handled with a greater sense of form than in any of the earlier books. *A Modern Chronicle* (1910) is scarcely so good a book. Mr. Churchill is lengthy without excuse; and this story of the unfortunate marriages of a modern American woman, clever as a piece of character-study, suffers from excessive elaboration of a flimsy and monoto-

nous plot motive. American politics, the problem of married life in modern America, occupied Mr. Churchill in *Coniston* and *A Modern Chronicle*, and from these he turned to discuss the religion of the country in *The Inside of the Cup* (1913). This is an American version of *The Case of Richard Meynell*, and the strong family likeness between the writing of Mr. Churchill and Mrs. Humphry Ward is here emphasised. Mr. Churchill takes himself seriously, he has little lightness, he is an intellectual and the pose of the teacher is gaining upon him. He is plainly not an easy or facile writer, and intellectual considerations weigh more heavily with him than the more unconscious aims of the artist. It is rather by sheer force of intellect than by any natural gifts that Mr. Churchill reaches his ends.

Robert Herrick, b. 1868.

Professor Robert Herrick, after publishing one or two novels which scarcely call for comment, suddenly made a name for himself with *The Gospel of Freedom* (1898), a study in the now much overworked topic—the ill-mated wife's awakening to a spirit of emancipation. It was some years before he again wrote novels of equal value, *The Common Lot* (1904) and *The Memoirs of an American Citizen* (1905); and these were followed by the still finer *Together* (1908). The first two are indictments of dishonest commercial enterprise, the third another of the many studies in the problem of marriage. In these books Professor Herrick shows himself a thoughtful writer, but given to overloading his narrative, a fault which he developed still further in *A Life for a Life* (1910), in which his quest of epic grandeur leads him to exaggerated sensationalism and the introduction of a great overweight in the discussion of sociological problems.

Ambrose Bierce, b. 1842.

Nearly all the writers named above write the short story, and in the case of several it either represents the greater part of their work or that activity in which they are most successful. The number of American tale writers is so great that an attempt to name or discuss individual authors would be fruitless; and in the majority of cases the level of attainment is not sufficiently high to call for special notice. But among

writers of the short story Mr. Ambrose Bierce cannot be left without mention. His strongest liking is, perhaps, for the writing of a fierce and heavy-handed type of satirical verse, of which the most characteristic part has been gathered in *Shapes of Clay* (1903). But the only quality of his satire is its downrightedness; it lacks wit, flexibility and point. As a writer of short stories he is on his own ground. The best of these are collected in a volume entitled *In the Midst of Life* (first called *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, 1892), a collection based on the author's experiences in the Civil War, and a volume of fantastic and supernatural tales, *Can Such Things Be?* (1894). Mr. Bierce is a disciple of Poe, and in the best of his short stories he is little behind his master in his handling of the morbid and gruesome. The method in each tale is the same. He conducts his story exactly stage by stage to an unexpected and grimly ironical climax, and leaves the reader horrified. The last word may be used advisedly, for not seldom Mr. Bierce seems to dilate upon the disgusting and repulsive for its own sake, until sometimes—the story called 'The Coup de Grâce' is a case in point—the horrible is in danger of becoming the whole *raison d'être* of the story. Besides the device of the ironical climax Mr. Bierce displays a constant interest in the attempt to represent an eternity of agony lived in a few moments—e.g. the prisoner with the noose about his neck awaiting execution, the mental torture of the man mesmerised by the gleam of a serpent's eyes. Mr. Bierce is a past-master in the art of the macabre tale.

Jack London, 1876–1916.

Jack London, although he wrote several novels, was by gift a writer of the brief sketch and short story. He could not conceive a long plot as a whole or bring a number of characters together in a coherent narrative. His tales are by no means of equal value; they relate to wild and savage, to vagrant and curious life in every corner of the globe, and many bear traces of the hurried rate at which they were written and relinquished to the press. The style is sometimes ugly, and it is beset with the common American fault of exaggerated language; but in one thing Jack London

hardly fails—in his wonderfully vivid and realistic painting of landscape, colour and atmosphere. In this faculty he is an artist in words whom no living American writer can rival. And the finest examples of his achievement in this particular field are to be found in his stories of human and animal life in Alaska. *Burning Daylight* (1910) is probably the best tale of the Klondike gold-rush yet written. The frozen silence of earth and sky in that northern region is painted with an exactness which no experience could make more vivid to the mind. Unfortunately he was no novelist, and this book collapses in its latter half into a collection of comparatively uninteresting incidents in the hero's career. And not less powerful than the earlier half of *Burning Daylight* are those splendid tales of dog and wolf life, *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1907). Jack London wandered far and wide, but the Klondike, whither he went in the early days of the gold-rush, seized the young man's imagination as no part of his later experience moved him. In his many short stories and tales of the northern wilds he reached his highest standard as a literary craftsman.

Gertrude Franklin Atherton, b. 1859.

Among America's many women writers Mrs. Atherton has won a reputation for the intellectual power of her work. Nevertheless she is an unequal writer. *Rulers of Kings* (1904), a romance of an American's relations with a royal family of Europe, is preposterous to the point of weariness; and the book seems to exemplify not only deliberate exaggeration but a want of balance in the author. In each of Mrs. Atherton's books we have the study of a single individual set in the midst of a particular environment which moulds the character. In *The Californians* (1898) a Spanish-American girl attempts to break loose from the fetters of hidalgo concepts of life. *Senator North* (1900) is a picture of an American girl, taught to despise politics, and her contact with political life in Washington. In *The Tower of Ivory* (1910) a well-born young Englishman in diplomatic circles, starved by a small income and lavish tastes, is studied in his relationship with the artistic and the conventional feminine types. But the finest of Mrs. Atherton's books

is *Ancestors* (1907), in which we watch the instincts of a Californian ancestry bearing fruit in the mind and character of a young Englishman. Mrs. Atherton's varied experience enables her to write of many scenes, characters and places. She is in familiar touch with several phases of life, she writes with a masculine rather than a feminine outlook on the world, and she has imagination. But she is wanting in reserve and in sense of form, and is therefore unable to distinguish between her best and gross lapses into the absurd and sensational.

Kate Douglas Wiggin, b. 1857.

Of a very different character is the writing of Kate Douglas Wiggin (Mrs. George C. Riggs) whose preoccupation with kindergartens has coloured all her writing and given her a constant interest in child life. In hardly any of her books can she be called the novelist; she is rather the naïve, bright and entertaining story-teller, receptive and gifted with a native charm in setting down her impressions. Her books are impressionistic sketches of childhood, of New England life, of an American girl's experiences in the older world. *The Story of Patsy* (1889) and *Timothy's Quest* (1890) show how clearly she has penetrated into the workings of the childish mind. *Penelope's English Experiences* (1893) is a miscellany hung upon a slight story, and was followed by other Penelope books descriptive of the American point of view in relation to other parts of the British Isles. But Kate Douglas Wiggin's best work is to be found in the Rebecca series, beginning with *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903), which paints sympathetically, happily, with humour and optimism the not very gay life of agricultural New England. In these easy-going chronicles her simple method of narration finds its natural expression.

Edith Wharton, b. 1862.

Mrs. Edith Wharton is one of the ablest and most thoughtful of living American writers. Her short stories, and with these she began, are of a type and character which raise them far above the short story approved by the common magazine of the day. The tales contained in *The Greater Inclination* (1899), *Crucial Instances* (1901) and *The Descent of Man* (1904) turn upon mental processes and the clash of moral motives, they relate

the tragedy of misunderstanding, of illusion, of the irony of circumstance; and the "point of view," as understood by Henry James, enters largely into them. Mrs. Wharton is an introspective writer; for her the world of the mind is everything, and the event is only a reflex of inner experience. In this respect she would have succeeded even better had she not been led away by the lure to which so many American writers succumb, the desire to use the story of the individual as typical of some phase of life or a social problem.

The House of Mirth (1905) is the best example of Mrs. Wharton's gifts as a writer. It is a close and clear-sighted study of the woman of fine education and tastes drawn into tragedy for the want of money to satisfy these tastes and an inability to marry a social and intellectual inferior merely for the sake of money. The converse of this story —a woman of vulgar taste and training striving for a place in society—*The Custom of the Country* (1913), is also a striking book; but it is less restrained, and its satire sometimes borders on the extravagant. *The Fruit of the Tree* (1907) handles a grave moral problem, but the central theme is broken up by irrelevant matter. It cannot be placed with the best of Mrs. Wharton's books. Better are the slight but wonderfully perspicuous narratives of *Madame de Treymes* (1907) and *The Reef* (1912), which contain all that goes to prove Mrs. Wharton's fine knowledge of the influence of custom and convention in the conflict of human desires and failings. These and *The House of Mirth* mark Mrs. Wharton as a writer distinguished in style, epigrammatic force and a knowledge of the recondite workings of the human mind.

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